Community to Community Forum

November 30, 2000

Hosted by District of Kent
Co-sponsored by FVTAC, funded by UBCM
Friendship House, Agassiz, BC

Participating Councils

- District of Kent
- Skawahlook First Nation
- Scowlitz First Nation
- Village of Harrison Hot Springs
- Seabird Island First Nation
- Cheam First Nation

Session Summary
Background and Executive Summary

Forum Background and Planning:
In 1999 the UBCM announced the Community to Community Forum project, inviting Local Governments in BC to partner with First Nations Governments to hold day-long joint council meetings or other events designed to:

- to improve overall relations between governments
- provide a time and place for dialogue on mutual interests.

Mayor Pranger and Councillor Al Fraser, members of the Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee, a committee which provides local government input into the treaty process, expressed interest in hosting such an event.

A motion was passed at the FVTAC meeting that FVTAC co-sponsor a District of Kent initiated Forum, providing staff assistance of the FVTAC Aboriginal Affairs Coordinator, Tamara Little, who would assist with the grant proposal and event coordination.

Over the next year, Mayor Pranger, Councillor Fraser and Tamara Little contacted neighbouring First Nations Chiefs and invited them to participate in an event, and with First Nations partners confirmed, submitted a grant proposal that was approved by the UBCM.

The Forum planning group, consisting of Chiefs, Mayors, Councillors and staff from Skawahlook, Scowlitz, Seabird Island and Sto:lo Nation was formed, and met in September 2000 to establish a joint agenda, and plan the event together. It was a priority for District of Kent that the event meet the needs of all the Councils, and that an agenda be formulated together. The Village of Harrison Hot Springs was also invited to participate, given their geographic closeness and shared interests, and Cheam First Nation also participated in the Forum. At this time common interests in the management of the Fraser River was identified as a key topic that would benefit from joint discussion.

The Fraser River management is a complex thing, involving multiple governments, agencies and stakeholders, so the Forum planners decided to open the Community to Community Forum up to special guests who would be invited to attend the morning session, observe the dialogue on the issue between the First Nations and Local Governments, and participate in a question and answer period at the end. Forum planning group members identified invitees to the Forum Coordinator, Tamara Little, and invitations were sent out to over 40 observers to attend the event.

The Community to Community Forum was held in Agassiz on November 30, 2000 in the Friendship House, with over 50 Forum participants and guests in attendance, including representatives of Federal Departments including Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND)-Federal Treaty Negotiation Office, Department of Fisheries and Oceans; the Provincial Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MELP), Ministry of Highways, Land Use Coordination Office, BC Assets and Lands, Ministry of Mines, and agencies and companies such as the Fraser Basin Council, Catherwood Towing, and Northwest Hydraulics. Fraser Valley Regional District and Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee members and staff also attended, as well as the
Union of BC Municipalities President and staff, and Harrison Agassiz Chamber of Commerce. Community leaders such as Barry Penner, MLA, and former Mayor John Les were also in attendance.

The event lasted from 9 AM - 4:30 PM, with an morning session held as a discussion between participants on their interests in the management of the Fraser River. Topics identified by the Forum planning group were:

⇒ dyking
⇒ provincial initiatives on the protection of riverside areas
⇒ gravel extraction
⇒ streamside protection directives

Observers from a number of external government and related agencies were invited to attend and learn from the discussion. A question and answer session followed at which time clarification on issues, particularly relating to the status of the moratorium on Fraser River gravel extraction and the status of the Protected Area Strategy designating parks, was provided by federal and provincial officials.

Observers and guests were taken by bus to Seabird Island new hall for a lunch provided by Seabird Island school’s Grade 4 class. After a welcome song and lunch, the guests were thanked for their participation, and the Forum participants - the Council members and staffs - returned to Friendship House for the afternoon.

The Afternoon session began with a presentation by cultural advisor Sonny McHalsie from Sto:lo Nation reviewed maps of Sto:lo territory and provided background on the oral traditions and history of the Sto:lo Nation and its members. This was followed by a two hour discussion on the topic “how can we build upon current relationships” facilitated by professional facilitator, Chris Corrigan. The resulting discussion highlighted a number of suggestions and outcomes, notably interest in sending joint letters expressing concerns about both the gravel extraction policy and protected area strategies in the Fraser River area by all participants, the importance of improving communication and information sharing, and the need for a follow-up session on January 9, 2001 to continue the work begun at the Forum on joint issue identification and communication.

The event was classified as a success by all Forum participants in that it provided an opportunity for joint dialogue on an issue all Councils have grave concerns over - the current management of the Fraser River. It also began an internal discussion on issues between the governments, and an opportunity to learn more about First Nations cultures and history in the area. The primary outcome of the session, however, was dialogue and relationship building - having the opportunity to get to know one another, share a meal, and learn about one another.
Thanks

The Community to Community Forum was the result of the support and work of many people and organizations. Although not a complete list of those who assisted, the District of Kent and the Forum participants wish to thank the following individuals and organizations in particular for their support:

The funding agent, the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM), particularly President Jim Abram and Senior Policy Analyst Alison McNeil; Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee, the co-sponsor for the staff support, and Tamara Little, event coordinator; Seabird Island First Nation and Mark Point and the Grade 4 class for the catered lunch; Linda Pearson, District of Kent; Chris Corrigan, the afternoon facilitator; Mr. Lapeyre at Friendship House; Sto:lo Nation and Clarence Pennier for their support and assistance in planning the event.

Mayor Pranger thanks the observers who attended the morning session for their support and attendance. Their attendance was an important part of the event valued by the Chiefs and Mayors - Local Government and First Nations Government appreciates the support of the federal and provincial government staffs as they begin to define their new relationships, and articulate joint local community perspectives.
Community to Community Forum
November 30, 2000
Hosted by District of Kent, Friendship House, Agassiz

MORNING SESSION
Participants and Observers
9:00 AM WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION - Chaired by Mayor Pranger
  • Opening Prayers
  • Welcome and introductory statements by Mayor Pranger and Councillor Fraser, District of Kent, and Mayor Ramsay, Village of Harrison Hot Springs
  • Welcome and introductory statements by First Nations Chiefs from Skawahlook, Seabird Island, Cheam, Scowlitz and Sto:lo First Nations
  • Remarks by President Jim Abram, UBCM
  • Introductions of Participants and Review of Forum Agenda

9:15-11:30 MORNING ROUNDTABLE SESSION
JOINT INTERESTS ON THE FRASER RIVER
Discussion of shared interests in the management and use of the Fraser River

Objective: learn about our shared interests and how we may work together to increase local involvement in decisions about the Fraser River.

Opening remarks on the following topics (5 minutes each)
  • dyking (Vick Galey, Northwest Hydrolics)
  • gravel extraction and the health of the Fraser and surrounding areas (Vick Galey, Northwest Hydrolics)
  • community interests in protection of riverside areas (Ian Vaughan, District of Kent Planning)
  • stream side protection and its impacts (Kim Fowler, Manager of Development Services, City of Chilliwack)

Open roundtable discussion to follow

11:30 - 12:00 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - observers invited to participate

12:00 - 1:15 SHARED LUNCH AT SEABIRD ISLAND
  • for participants and observers
  • a bus will be available for transportation to and from Seabird Island

1:00 PM Board buses and return to Friendship House
Community to Community Forum

AFTERNOON SESSION
Forum participants only
1:15 - 2:15   PRESENTATION BY STO:LO NATION - Sonny McHalsie, Sto:lo Nation

2:15-2:30   BREAK

2:30 - 4:30   NEXT STEPS FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
   • Facilitator, Chris Corrigan
   • An open discussion to identify key topics for ongoing dialogue between the Councils
   • Identification of future joint projects and activities
   • Next Steps for planning a regional Community to Community Forum to build on local discussions and benefit the region

4:30   CLOSING REMARKS
   • Review Action Items
   • Closing statements
Mayor Pranger, District of Kent, opened the morning session at Friendship House in Agassiz with a welcome to over 25 participants and 25 observers.

Mayor Pranger invited Reverend Dr. Steve Laug and Councillor Clem Seymour to begin the morning’s work with prayers.

Opening Remarks
Mayor Pranger - District of Kent
Mayor Pranger welcomed everyone to the historic and unique event. As neighbours for many years, the communities have much to gain by working more effectively together, a priority for District of Kent. Her Council has begun significant dialogues already with Seabird Island First Nation, and looks forward to additional discussions with other First Nations Councils in the future. In her opinion, the Forum was a turning point in the relationship, offering opportunities to build relationships and dialogue on key issues of mutual interest and concern - the management of the Fraser River. The Mayor indicated that “by considering this topic together, within a community context, we will be able to more strongly articulate the local concerns and solutions to others responsible for managing this important resource.” Speaking to the afternoon session planned between the Councils, Mayor Pranger indicated that “through communication, good will and diplomacy we will better serve our communities,” and that she was excited about the day.

Councillor Al Fraser - District of Kent
Councillor Fraser echoed the Mayor’s support for the project, expressing enthusiasm for the day’s work.

Mayor Don Ramsay - Village of Harrison Hot Springs
Mayor Ramsay welcomed the group to the area, thanking Seabird Island and District of Kent for hosting the event in their communities.

Chief Bobb - Seabird Island First Nation
Chief Bobb focused his comments on the importance of communities working together, despite past challenges in building relationships.

Chief June Quipp - Cheam First Nation
Chief Quipp welcomed participants to the Pilalt tribe’s territory, and provided some overview of the history and geography of her community. Chief Quipp thanked Mayor Pranger for assembling the group to discuss common concerns about the gravel build-up in the Fraser River. The Chief provided some perspectives on gravel issues from Cheam’s point of view, indicating some concerns over the current gravel reach study process relating to jurisdictional issues and Aboriginal Title. The Cheam First Nation believed that at times direct action would be necessary to ensure some of their key concerns were addressed by other governments. The Chief indicated that although pleased to take part in the Forum, the Cheam First Nation did not consider it a form of consultation. The Chief finished her comments by expressing hope that changes in the
relationship between the parties occurs, that Local Government begin to take First Nations considerations into account and dialogue in the future.

*Chief Pennier - Scowlitz First Nation*
Chief Pennier described the three Scowlitz Indian Reserves, indicating they overlap with both District of Kent and District of Mission. His key concerns are flooding issues and gravel extraction, both of which affect fishermen in the area. The Chief indicated he was happy to have the meeting and looked forward to the dialogue.

*Councillor Debra Schneider - Skawahlook First Nation*
Councillor Schneider thanked Mayor Pranger for the invitation to Skawahlook First Nation.

*Sto:lo Nation*
Due to an unanticipated scheduling conflict, the Sto:lo Nation was unable to attend the Forum.

*Other First Nations*
Chief Ron John, Chawathil First Nation, was also in attendance, and indicated support for many of the comments by Chief Quipp regarding the need for direct action at times. He supported the need for more First Nations input into resource management, and the need for access to resources. The Chief expressed appreciation for the opportunity for open discussion at the forum, but indicated that if honest discussion does not solve issues, his Nation may need to look to direct action as a solution.

*UBCM*
UBCM President Jim Abram thanked the group for inviting him and arranging the forum, and echoed earlier comments about honesty in the discussion. He agreed with Mayor Pranger that the time had arrived for open discussions between First Nations and Local Governments, and asserted his belief, as former Chair of the UBCM Aboriginal Affairs Committee, that by working together the two groups will make headway on issues. President Abram reviewed the history of the Community to Community Forum, which began in 1997 with a BC-wide event. The Forums are designed to be build relationships and discuss how to best serve our communities. There have been 15 Forums this far, the funding of which has come from the provincial and federal governments. President Abram concluded his comments by indicating that since communities live together, mutual respect is important.
Morning Discussion

The morning discussion was designed by Forum planners to be a dialogue on issues of joint interest in the management of the Fraser River. The goal was to find common ground in the interests of First Nations and Local Governments, and establish any joint actions. Observers from appropriate Ministries departments and agencies were invited to observe the first ever dialogue of the elected officials representing all communities in the area on their joint on local interests in the management of the Fraser River. Key issues identified by the Forum planners were:

- dyking
- gravel extraction
- provincial initiatives on the protection of riverside areas
- streamside protection directives

Discussion began with brief technical overviews of the topics by municipal staff and contractors identified by the Forum planners:

**Dyking and Gravel Extraction - presentation by Vic Galey, Northwest Hydraulics**

- Mr. Galey provided an overview of the issue, identifying the two options for flood protection as dyking or gravel extraction. He reviewed the challenges and benefits of each, cautioning the continued reliance on larger dykes. Balance of options was the key, and caution should be used before initiating any activity.

**Protection of Riverside Areas**

- Ian Vaughn, Director of Planning, District of Kent reviewed the recent Lower Fraser Protected Area Strategy for park designation and wildlife protection areas along the Fraser River. Mayor Pranger provided a review of the context of the topic, indicating that although the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks had rescinded the order to designate the park areas, and had never begun implementing the wildlife protection areas, Local Governments, First Nations, and citizens were still concerned. Specifically, there was a fear that the designations, on which community members and First Nations did not feel there was adequate consultation, would be reactivated.

**Streamside Protection**

- Kim Fowler, Director of Municipal Development, City of Chilliwack, provided a review of current directives on streamside set-backs being given by the province, and identified Local Government and citizen concerns. Two keys issues were: the need for compensation should private land owners loose economic benefits as a result of the new directives, and administrative fairness in a regulatory scheme imposed on municipalities and citizens creating an increasingly complex regulator network that is borne particularly by private land owners.

**Discussion - Key Points:**
The below points were identified by Forum participants as key issues. This discussion was amongst Council members only, with Questions and Answers including observers at the end (see next section). This is a summary only.
• protected area strategy - although BC withdrew support of recommendations of the working group re: designation of parks, the Minister indicated in a letter she would reactive the report if no alternatives were found.
• what is the status on any continuing community consultation on FLPAS - some First Nations already voiced concern
• concerns over the magnitude of PAS areas in original plan
• if FLPAS consultation does begin again, First Nations interests in lands and cultural uses must be respected
• farming community is negatively affected if parks limit farming
• BC imposes limits on local activity, when there are other areas that could be targeted for protection
• increasing provincial requirements that limit private property
• need joint action on FLPAS to ensure it isn’t reactivated
• streamside protection - could limit municipal development projects (infrastructure)
• concerns about balancing job needs and economic development with park needs
• lack of local control in land management
• consider Fraser River more than “resource”
• communities need to work together to ensure Fraser River is protected
• processes and initiatives need joint Local Governments and First Nations involvement to encourage communication e.g. FVRD Forestry Committee
• First Nations - concerned that over 30% of Sto:lo traditional territory lost to fee simple or other status
• dyking issues-need First Nations and Local Governments planning together
• concern re: development of gravel extraction plans prevent First Nations involvement and authority over decision making
• gravel resources-who benefits? who decides?
• no provincial or federal updates on status of extraction moratorium
• knowledge of local people re: Fraser River not recognized
• need to recognize challenges in managing and controlling the River - costly and difficult
• balance - Fraser River is affected by other activities e.g. logging
• concern that DIAND doesn’t adequately support protective dyking on First Nations lands - impacts neighbouring areas
• need complete plan for the Fraser River
• Federal regulations should be encouraging, not punishing. Needs consultation and planning
• what information is available on upstream affects - natural vs. human, local vs. regional?

Question and Answer (including observers)

• clarification - FLPAS was rescinded by Minister, and there was no plan to implement wildlife protection areas
• Q. What is the moratorium status? - the Fraser Basin Council is consulting on its draft plan for the Fraser River, with an interim plan due in January, which will aim to
balance differing interest in the Fraser River. MELP may or may not be in a position to then lift the temporary ban on gravel extraction, depending on the data in the Plan.

- Q. Did UBCM support the streamside protection directives at the recent convention? Yes, partly because of years of work trying to balance interests resulted in the need to move forward on something, but there wasn't a lot of enthusiasm. Comments about the lack of true support and full knowledge by participants when voting on support, due to technical nature of topic.

- Q. Is the group going to forward a joint statement by Local Government and First Nations on the importance of extracting gravel from the Fraser now to prevent future flooding? This is vital because of the lack of political direction on the issue now. Encouraged participants to look at where common group was, and focus on solving those issues, not others such as revenue issues on gravel.

- clarification - the streamside protection directives do apply on Crown Lands
Afternoon Discussion
The afternoon session was a closed session including Local Government and First Nations only. It began with a presentation by Sto:lo Nation cultural advisor, Sonny McHalsie, on First Nations history and oral traditions.

This was followed by a discussion with facilitator Chris Corrigan asking the question: “How can we strengthen the relationship between Local Government and First Nations in the area?”

After a small breakout session members returned and identified the following key issues and outcomes:
- communication, information sharing (reports, notices) with adequate lead time
- continued discussions and problem solving
- joint goal setting e.g. gravel issues, resources, shared legal costs
- more face to face sessions - quarterly, to include all First Nations
- develop joint projects e.g. infrastructure, sewer, water
- ensure follow-up - personal responsibility for actions
- economic sustainability - proactive and joint planning for developments and shared benefits/impacts
- incorporating traditional Aboriginal knowledge in planning
- lobbying senior levels of government together
- common statement of interests - protocol or letter of understanding
- address short and long term projects separately
- Aboriginal Rights and Title - more cross-cultural activities and workshops
- development joint cultural awareness events
- be more inclusive and identify opportunities for partnerships
- joint meetings around treaty implementation, but also work with non-treaty groups
- engage people who are impacted in planning and consultation
- address fears and concerns of local citizens
  - public articles in local papers and information sessions - partner with provincial and federal governments, BCTC
- discussion on strategies to prevent erosion and support dyking

Outcomes and Next Steps
The following specific short term next steps were identified:
- Lowlands Parks - All four First Nations and two Local Governments will jointly draft a letter to the provincial Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks reiterating concern over any potential implementation on the Fraser Lowlands Protected Area Strategy, and support of a postponement of any additional consultation on the topic. District of Kent will draft the letter, then seek input from all.
- Gravel Extraction - All four First Nations and two Local Governments will jointly draft a letter to the provincial Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans encouraging a decision in January to again begin extracting gravel from the Fraser River for flood protection reasons.
- January Meeting - All Forum participants will meet January 9, 2000 at 9 AM (location TBA) to review additional outcomes, and establish medium and long term goals for relationship building and joint projects.
Press Release

For immediate release

Historic Community to Community Forum Held in Agassiz with First Nations and Municipal Councils

AGASSIZ AND SEABIRD ISLAND, BC/November 30, 2000 -- The District of Kent hosted a historic and unique Forum with four neighbouring First Nations governments today, the Skahwalook, Scowlitz, Cheam, and Seabird Island Nations. The Mayor and Council members of the neighbouring Village of Harrison Hot Springs also attended.

The event was funded by the Federal and Provincial governments, through a Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) program. UBCM President, Director Jim Abram was in attendance and explained that the Forum program, three years old, began with a BC-wide event with over 100 First Nations and Local Governments. Fifteen forums have since been held on a local level. The event was co-sponsored by the Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee, a committee of Local Governments which provides advice to the Province on treaty issues and supports its members on Aboriginal issues.

The morning session was a roundtable discussion on local concerns about the Fraser River, namely dyking, gravel extraction, balancing local needs with park designations on the River, and concerns over incoming streamside protection directives.

“The goal of the session was to highlight joint interests of the First Nations and Local Governments in how the Fraser is managed, and identify these key interests to those with jurisdiction over the river,” explained Mayor Pranger. Observers were invited from Federal Departments including Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND), Department of Fisheries and Oceans; the Provincial Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks (MELP), Fraser Basin Council, and other agencies involved in many aspects of the management of the Fraser River.

“By planning this event together, our Governments have marked the beginning of a new relationships between local First Nations and Local Governments. The morning session demonstrated that senior officials must begin to consider the significant joint voice of local community governments,” explained Mayor Pranger, who also sits as Vice-Chair of the FVTAC.

Seabird Island First Nation hosted lunch, after which guests left, and a presentation on Sto:lo culture and history was made to the Forum group. After, a closed afternoon session provided an environment for First Nations and Local Government officials to dialogue on key issues, and begin the process of strengthening relationships and identifying ways to more effectively work together.

“Communication is key to building our relationships” a First Nation participant advised, “joint initiatives on specific items can also assist.”

Outcomes of the session included a planned January meeting to consider how to implement recommendations on relationship building, which could include regular joint meetings, letters of
mutual recognition or joint cultural activities. The group is immediately drafting joint letters to both government urging the extraction of gravel from the Fraser River this January, and the importance of postponing any park designation on the Fraser River until Aboriginal title and community interests are fully considered and addressed.

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For further information please contact: Mayor Sylvia Pranger, (604) 819-7063 cell
First Nations bands and local gov’ts jointly opposed to gravel moratorium

BY JASON ROESSEL

Local municipalities and First Nations governments are jointly drafting letters to federal and provincial governments asking gravel removal to start this January and postponing park designation along the Fraser River until aboriginal and community interests were considered and addressed.

These two recommendations were the result of an historic forum including the District of Kent, Harrison Hot Springs, and the Seabird Island Nations. The district hosted this first-ever forum held locally at the Friendship House last Thursday.

"This is a first in Kent history," said Kent Mayor Sylvia Pranger. "I hope this will improve overall relationships between the two communities." Seabird Island Chief Wayne Bobb also voiced positive comments at the outset.

"I like these forums. It allows us to tell people what our aspirations are," he said. "The relationships we have now are better, but need to improve. We're still not looking upon as equals. We are here to stay and you are here to stay: we have to find ways to co-exist."

The most contentious issue of the day was the proposed protected area strategy (PAS) which would claim land on both sides of the Fraser River, up to 15 metres per side, as parkland.

"It's a tremendous land grab," said Ted Westlie, Kent councillor.

While the PAS was put aside months ago so the province could better consult with affected residents, Minister Joan Sawicki ended her letter to communities by stating if nothing acceptable to the province could be worked out, they would go ahead with the original plan.

"They have to come back and talk to the people here," said Clem Seymour, Seabird Island band. "This PAS encompassed all of Seabird. Who are they protecting the land from? Who are they protecting it for?"

Kent councillor Mel Jorgensen voiced similar concerns.

"The government is trying to take something away from the people. Whether it be a burial ground, or agricultural land," he said.

"I don't think there's enough attention paid to people who've lived along the river their whole lives," said Pranger.

Cheney Indian band Chief June Quill spoke more aggressively.

"We've been stepped on too long. We do intend to be involved. Whether it's at a forum like this, or at a blockade," she said. "We don't agree with that study at this time because we (province and Chem) don't have an understanding on land issues."

The crowd also heard a presentation by Vick Galey, Northwest Hydrotics, on dyking and gravel extraction.

"Don't build dykes any higher than you need to," he cautioned. "It's very expensive and destructive if there's a breach."

He also said gravel extraction should not be "an isolated issue." Removing gravel pits more trucks on the road, thereby increasing costs, he stated. A Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks official, Neil Peters, B.C. water management branch, was put on the spot by MLA Barry Penner when asked if there's a definite end to the gravel moratorium. Peters didn't answer and instead pushed the question over to Jim Vanderwal, Fraser Basin Council (FBC), the group tasked with formulating a gravel extraction plan.

He said the plan calls for extraction starting in January. Vanderwal asked another ministry representative to comment and she said the plan is necessary before anything is taken out of the river.

"If the plan is not ready, it puts us in a difficult position. Works (gravel removal) approval will be given based on available information," she said. "Available information" is considered to be the FBC's Hope to Mission plan.
Bands and municipalities oppose gravel moratorium

By Jason Roessel
Metro Valley News Service

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