



# Aboriginal/Non-Aboriginal PARTNERSHIPS

*Partnerships Sustaining the Basin*

FRASER BASIN COUNCIL SPECIAL REPORT

Spring 2000

## Introduction

Today, much of the dialogue on relationships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal interests focuses on the challenges that sometimes arise. Yet within the Fraser Basin there are several successful partnerships that bring aboriginal and non-aboriginal people together towards ensuring a healthy future for both communities. The Fraser Basin Council has undertaken the development of this publication - in conjunction with others - to illustrate some of the evolving partnerships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities. The partnerships explored include a diverse range of sectors from social services, to forestry, fisheries and education.

The partnerships explored in this document are works in progress. Many are, by the admission of the partners involved, not perfect. Yet these partnerships are indicators of a willingness between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people to work together to address issues of common concern and build sustainable communities. In this context, they are examples to be considered, learned from and built upon.



First Host Partnership (see page 2)

## Conflict and Partnerships

Good working relationships are not defined by an absence of conflict; rather, conflict is an element of all relationships. How it is addressed and resolved is what builds trust. In effective partnerships, conflict is anticipated and proactively managed in a variety of ways to ensure that conflict is an opportunity for relationships to grow. The design of planning and decision-making processes provides an opportunity to anticipate where conflict may arise and establish mechanisms for managing conflict and turning it to advantage.

## Principles Behind the Partnerships

### Basis for Partnerships

Partnerships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities can be based on mutual economic benefit, as in the case of joint ventures or service agreements, or they may also reflect a recognition of our changing understanding of aboriginal rights and title and the need for new approaches to governance.

### Role of Individuals

Good working relationships between organizations are built upon good working relationships between individuals. The personal commitment of individuals to one another is often the key to the development and maintenance of partnerships; on all sides there must be individuals who believe in working together to achieve common goals, and who have the motivation and capacity to reach consensus.

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# Basin case

## United Nations International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples

The theme of partnerships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people is recognized as a priority beyond the Basin. A key theme of the United Nations "International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples" (1993-2003) is "indigenous people: partnership in action."

Examining aboriginal/non-aboriginal partnerships in the Basin provides a way to inventory some regional contributions that are consistent with the spirit of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples.

## Tourism

Ecotourism is a fast growing sector of the economy of many Basin communities. In many cases, ecotourists are also interested in learning about other cultures in addition to their interest in nature. According to Statistics Canada, 67 per cent of European visitors want to experience a native travel product. In 1997 aboriginal owned and operated tourism enterprises in British Columbia generated \$45 million in direct revenues. Managed carefully, ecotourism can provide a sustainable source of income for communities adjusting to challenges in the forestry and fisheries sectors.

## FirstHost Partnership

One exciting partnership facilitating a sustainable tourism economy in the Fraser Basin is the FirstHost hospitality training program. FirstHost is a one-day workshop teaching customer service skills that has been developed by the Urban Native Indian Education Society (UNIES), with initial project support from a number of partners, including the Pacific Rim Institute of Tourism (PRIT), Aboriginal Business Canada, Human Resources Development Canada and First Nations business owners.

FirstHost originated following an assessment by First Nations within their communities of the type of training required to prepare individuals for involvement in tourism. The SuperHost program administered by the provincial government, popular elsewhere in British Columbia, had low enrollment of aboriginal people. Through a series of workshops the need for a training program relevant to First Nations was identified. With the number of distinct aboriginal cultures in British Columbia, the challenge was to create a program that accommodates this diversity. The program also needed to have an effective delivery mechanism, making it accessible to aboriginal communities, financially and geographically.

FirstHost brings customer service training directly to aboriginal communities. Over the last three years, a team of trainers has been established in different First Nations, including those throughout the Fraser Basin, which customizes the program to the needs and traditions of each Nation's people. This feature of FirstHost has been part of its success. Equally important has been its exploratory

rather than answers-oriented format.

Participants discuss issues in a learning circle and role-play different inter-cultural scenarios, like how to educate the bargain hunter who wants to buy a hand-carved bracelet for the price of a replica.

Another key feature of FirstHost is that it addresses differing cultural perceptions of how to conduct business. Aboriginal communities involved in tourism have found that the standard "customer is always right" ethic undermines the building of relationships based on respect. FirstHost, focusing on hospitality, emphasizes how to bring heart into the exchange. In this way it promotes a business philosophy based on values, rather than the narrow objective of making a profit. One elder describing this tradition of hosting said:

"I started learning about hospitality early from elders. It had to do with our values of loving, caring, sharing and respect. I teach the same things to my children everyday. When someone comes to my home, my children are taught to feed them. Our way of life is to share."

The strength of FirstHost as a partnership has been the willingness of UNIES' partners to play a background role, so that the program can genuinely respond to community needs and be a First Nations product. This flexibility has allowed some fundamental shifts in program design, including:

- doing the initial assessment of needs and brain-storming at the community level, instead of relying on known models for human resources development or studies prepared by consultants;
- promoting the preparation of 'community leaders' instead of 'trainers' focused narrowly on tourism;
- replacing the original advisory committee with actual FirstHost leaders to oversee program development;
- looking beyond the usual scope of British Columbia or Canada in the first program evaluation to borrow from a leadership development model developed and tested by Native Americans in Hawaii.

The guiding principle of FirstHost has been that "you have to have a balanced relationship, or it is not a sustainable relationship." The respect shown by UNIES' partners has resulted in a program success, which in turn is capable of carrying the message of respect to other people.



## Community Services

Community services, including health and social services programs, is one area where a large number of partnerships between First Nations and federal and provincial governments are in place and have been for some time. These partnerships have evolved in response to the challenge facing non-aboriginal agencies responsible for delivering community services to First Nations. Traditionally, community services such as health and social programs were delivered directly by government agencies and designed primarily for delivery in non-aboriginal communities. As a result, many programs have focused on the symptoms rather than issues relating to causes and effects, and/or have neglected to meet the needs of aboriginal communities.

Today, First Nations, in conjunction with federal and provincial agencies, take a leadership role in providing culturally appropriate programs to their membership. The programs, mainly funded by government, provide for comprehensive planning between government agencies and First Nations in order to maintain standards and work within legislated provisions to assist children and families. Government agencies also assist in filling the gaps that may be created as a result of ongoing evaluation and restructuring of programs or provide consultation on program-related issues that arise. The benefits resulting from program control transferred to First Nations communities are significant to the consumer of the services, and government funds are better spent on agencies that directly improve services that demonstrate accountability to their consumers.

## Carrier Sekani Family Services Society

Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) is one First Nations organization that provides family support services primarily to First Nations peoples in partnership with a range of government and non-government organizations. CSFS is governed by a Board of Directors, from ten First Nations communities and an Urban Aboriginal representative. The organization is responsible for delivering various community

and social services including health programs, on-reserve child and family services, urban child and family support services, legal information counseling, non-insured health benefits, and addictions recovery programs.

**Child and Family Support Program** - The Child and Family Support Program, operated by CSFS, employs Family Care Workers in aboriginal communities and in the Prince George region who work as liaisons between various agencies and aboriginal clients. The program plays an important role in cases where aboriginal children have been or may be apprehended by the Ministry of Children and Families (MCF). Child and Family Care Workers work to facilitate communication between provincial agency staff and families, and to support families by:

- providing information to clients regarding their legal rights and child protection legislation;
- liaising between clients, social workers, lawyers, band employees, foster parents, school personnel and other agencies;
- providing moral support for clients who are involved in legal process and family conferences;
- providing counseling for clients with personal difficulties which impede their ability to provide a healthy environment for their children;
- providing information to clients on accessing financial aid, legal services, education and employment services;
- facilitating referrals to alcohol and drug treatment services, psychological services and services to children with special needs;
- recruiting aboriginal foster parents and;
- Home Support Services (transportation to and from foster home visits, peer counseling for parents).

The program is a benefit to aboriginal families that need assistance in accessing the complex network of agencies, programs and resources. The successful delivery of services is related to the recognition that families may be more comfortable talking about sensitive issues with people they feel identify with their circumstances and who are familiar with their own community. The program objectives include benefits to MCF staff, who may carry large caseloads and are unaware of the culture of the clientele, by providing follow-up with families and monitoring their progress. Program staff may also assist with interpreta-

## The Aboriginal Health Resource Directory

Published by the Community Health Associates of BC (1999), the directory provides an inventory of community-based organizations that provide health and social services to aboriginal communities.

Many of these organizations operate as partnerships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal governments.

Copies of the directory may be obtained at [www.cha-bc.org](http://www.cha-bc.org)

“You have to have a balanced relationship, or it is not a sustainable relationship.”

tion of the legislation and/or conditions of court orders where language barriers exist. Program Manager, Connie Matchatis, sums up the role of the Program “as looking out for the best interests of the client - the family. The program staff take a holistic approach which is family-centered as opposed to strictly child-centered, this philosophy differs from the child-centered approach of Ministry staff.”

Contact: Connie Matchatis, Carrier Sekani Family Services (250) 562-3591

## *Natural Resource Management*

The natural resources of the Fraser Basin have and continue to provide for the social and economic well-being of both aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities. As such, it should not be surprising that many of the partnerships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities in the Basin focus on natural resources. Though both groups may have different approaches to the management and use of natural resources, they possess skills and knowledge that can be used - in a complimentary manner - to help sustain the Basin's natural resources for all interests.



Michael George  
developing maps for  
TWFN (see page 13)

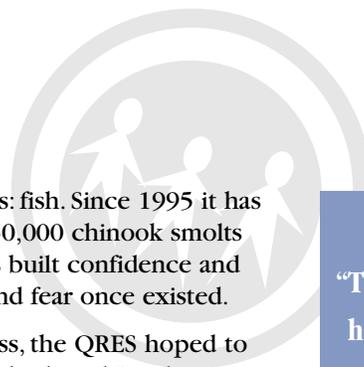
## *Nicola Valley Watershed Stewardship & Fisheries Authority*

The Nicola Valley Watershed Stewardship & Fisheries Authority (NVWSFA) is one of the leading partnerships for fisheries management in the Fraser Basin. Funded by Fisheries & Oceans Canada (DFO) through the federal *Aboriginal Fisheries Strategy* to undertake stock assessment, stock enhancement, and habitat restoration, it has built and now maintains records of unprecedented detail on watershed health. Quality fieldwork has earned it research contracts from both Forest Renewal B.C. and local forest licensees Tolko and Weyerhaeuser. This First Nations organization plays a critical role in facilitating communications and building consensus between the various parties involved in regional fisheries.

The success of the NVWSFA in bringing together parties of diverse interests to discuss fisheries management lies in its philosophy that battling over jurisdiction only results in losing the fish. It works closely with DFO to establish early warning systems for fisheries threats. When potential problems are detected, it alerts regional stakeholders, outlining the issue from a First Nations perspective and presenting concrete proposals for collaboration. Former NVWSFA program manager, Arnie Narcisse, believes that this approach is showing that “You can bring cowboys and Indians and industry and bureaucrats together to identify solutions.”

In dialogue with DFO, the NVWSFA has expanded its partnership ethic to strengthen a regional fisheries network. Key steps taken include:

- generating awareness (e.g., co-organizing the ‘Speaking for the Salmon Initiative’);
- pooling expertise (e.g., working via the Nicola Roundtable with cattle ranchers and forest licensees to address damage to fish in temperature-sensitive streams);
- developing policy (e.g., recommending and implementing precautionary checks and balances for fisheries management based on traditional knowledge of the watershed);
- establishing protocols (e.g., communicating ways to utilize traditional knowledge alongside other science in analysis and decision making);



- sharing traditional technologies (e.g., re-instituting fish weirs as instructed by elders to counteract habitat decline); and
- facilitating cross-boundary management (e.g., joining the B.C. Aboriginal Fisheries Commission to coordinate the 1998 *Fraser River First Nations' Conservation & Management Plan* for spawning salmon).

The NVWSFA's emphasis on partnering mirrors the often unseen web of connections between resource users in the watershed. It is geared to mobilizing neighbors into joint responsibility for the protection of threatened and endangered species. The results are seen in the increasing good will around many negotiating tables. Contact: Nicola Valley Watershed Stewardship Authority (250) 378-7196

## Quesnel River Enhancement Society

The Quesnel River Hatchery, once a research centre of the federal government, was closed in 1995 due to budget constraints. In anticipation of this, the Quesnel River Enhancement Society (QRES) was formed to maintain the facility as a community asset.

The establishment of QRES was spearheaded by the community of Likely, with the Cariboo Tribal Council (CTC), Williams Lake Timber Supply Association, and Cariboo-Chilcotin Fly Fishers Association as partners. Each of the parties saw threats to the watershed and local livelihoods; meanwhile, they shared a desire to show that a collective commitment can open possibilities overlooked by government. All now share decision making responsibility via the QRES Board of Directors.

From the beginning, the long-term objective of QRES has been to create a series of complementary projects to generate operating revenue, from fish farming to tourism and value-added wood working. Woven through these various plans is the dream of providing apprenticeship-based training. To launch and nurture this mix of activities, the partners have had to sustain strong commitment to the original vision. They also have had to adjust their expectation of the rate at which the different components could come into being.

Taking a "first things first" approach has enabled the QRES to keep its dream alive. In its first five years of partnership, the group has

focused on the obvious: fish. Since 1995 it has released 150,000 to 250,000 chinook smolts yearly. This success has built confidence and trust where mistrust and fear once existed.

Building on this success, the QRES hoped to institute a watershed "think tank" and training centre at the hatchery, with the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) at its helm. As of 1999, UNBC is now seeking approval for an Endowed Chair in Landscape Ecology. If accepted by FRBC, the Landscape Ecology Chair and the Quesnel fish hatchery will serve as the key components of a world class Landscape Ecology Centre.

A major strength of the QRES partnership in this time of transition has been its ability to think adaptively. All along, much doubt has been voiced about the ability of such a society to maintain a long-term initiative. This has led the group to look at ways to re-configure the partnership. In September 1999 the QRES unanimously decided that the CTC should relieve the community of Likely of some of the burden of coordination by assuming the leadership role in developing a joint business proposal. It created a stronger partnership concept, instead of thinking competitively about management or resources.

The QRES now enters its fifth year of partnership. Its success to date is due to several factors:

- the partnership is mobilized by a common vision;
- high awareness of the costs to future generations if the partnership dissolved;
- ownership and airing of conflict as issues arise, at both regular meetings and in community problem solving meetings;
- willingness by all to revisit and revise policies and procedures as necessary;
- open-minded approach to brainstorming possible action strategies;
- shared pride in having pulled together as a team, despite significant challenges and obstacles; and
- attendance of an aboriginal elder at meetings to provide a "wide angle" mirror to those around the table.

One lesson has been that the very emotions which sometimes surface as conflict or growing pains within a partnership, and even threaten to dissolve it, can be what ultimately bind people together in building a dream. Contact: Keith Ulrich, Quesnel River Enhancement Society (250) 790-2236

"The partners have had to sustain strong commitment to the original vision. They also have had to adjust their expectation of the rate at which the different components could come into being."

“The relationship between the Xeni Gwet’in and BC Parks is strengthened through a joint vision which incorporates the values of both aboriginal and non-aboriginal societies in the planning and management of the area.”

## *Tsilhqot’in People of Xeni and BC Parks (Ts’il?os Provincial Park)*

Ts’il?os Provincial Park, dedicated in 1994, encompasses an area of 233,000 hectares and is located in the traditional territory of the Xeni Gwet’in people and the Cariboo Chilcotin region of the Fraser Basin. The designation of this area as a provincial park was possible because of partnerships between and among a number of interests – including the Xeni Gwet’in First Nations Government and BC Parks.

The development of this partnership began in 1991 when the Xeni Gwet’in were asked by the provincial government to participate in the Chilko Lake Study Team. Xeni Gwet’in acted as one of the Co-Chairs of the Study Team which included local residents, recreational users and businesses, hikers, anglers and logging and mining interests. The Chilko Lake Study Team process recommended two zones within the study area including a Management Zone and a Protected Zone - what today is known as Tsi’lo?os Provincial Park.

While the Xeni Gwet’in were supportive of protecting the area from resource development activities, they had a number of concerns, related to their ability to continue to use the area for traditional cultural activities. The development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with BC Parks provided a way to recognize and address these concerns. The MOU permits the Xeni Gwet’in to use the area for hunting, fishing, trapping, berry picking, gathering of medicine, traditional ceremonies and camping.

Xeni Gwet’in also provided leadership in naming the Park, and Ts’il?os refers to a mountain peak which dominates the park. The mountain has spiritual significance for the Xeni Gwet’in and is celebrated in the legend of Ts’il?os – in which a person who was turned to stone and watches over the Xeni Gwet’in people.

The MOU provides assurances to the Xeni Gwet’in that their rights and interests shall receive consideration in the planning and management of the areas. At the same time, the MOU is consistent with the Xeni Gwet’in focus on protecting their traditional lands,

resources, culture and language. The relationship between the Xeni Gwet’in and BC Parks is strengthened through a joint vision which incorporates the values of both aboriginal and non-aboriginal societies in the planning and management of the area.

The implementation of the MOU is overseen by a management board which includes Chief and Council of the Xeni Gwet’in Nation and representatives of BC Parks. Complimenting the management board, a group of local interests - the Local Advisory Group - provides input on issues of broader public interest.

The mandate of the management board is to:

- discuss issues of mutual concern;
- identify traditional activities and interests within the park;
- exercise traditional activities;
- pursue employment opportunities for Xeni Gwet’in;
- identify sites of special spiritual-cultural significance;
- consult with the Local Advisory Group and the public;
- review and evaluate Park Use Permits, applications and tenures;
- develop annual management plans; and
- review and evaluate research proposals, publications and communications materials (i.e., signage).

While the management board works to achieve consensus among its members, provision has been made for dispute resolution. In the case of disputes the two parties may agree to obtain the services of a mediator or third party. Changes to the working relationship can be proposed by either party should they want to make changes to improve or enhance the relationship. The constructive working relationship between the Xeni Gwet’in Nation and BC Parks and other non-aboriginal interests is largely built upon three key factors. These are:

- First Nations involvement from inception;
- conflict resolution process; and
- regular communication.

A park management plan has been developed to help protect important wildlife and their habitat and wilderness recreation opportunities. The now completed plan provides an important tool for protecting natural, cultural and recreational values. While the park plan itself is an important achievement, the process of developing the plan strengthened relationships between the Xeni Gwet’in, BC

Parks and the Local Advisory Group that will support implementation of the MOU and the Park plan in the years to come. Contact: Steve Mazur, BC Parks (250) 398-4414 or Chief Roger William, Xeni Gwetin First Nation (250) 481-1149

## *Nazko Band and Slocan Forest Products*

One of the longest business relationships in British Columbia's forest sector is between the Nazko Band (Nazko) and Slocan Forest Products (Slocan). Since the early 1980s Nazko has contract logged for Slocan. This arrangement stands out as an example of how local companies can team up to retain benefits in the regional economy.

Near Quesnel there is a forest harvesting area known locally as the Native Block, and Slocan is one of the forest licensees with operating privileges in this zone. The company adheres to a protocol with Nazko, which assures the Band right of first refusal on any contracts within the Block. Negotiation of this protocol some 20 years ago has provided the basis for good business relations, with opportunities for both parties to diversify.

The heart of Nazko's ongoing contract work for Slocan is logging, and beneath its steady delivery of quality work is a common sense approach to business. Nazko Forest Management Ltd. made the transition from roadside logging to grapple skidding at the same time as other contractors. This "readiness" enabled the Band to branch out into a parallel operation in 1997, acquiring its own small forest license through another community-owned company. Together, these forest operations account for 80 per cent of the Band's employment.

Good business relations with Slocan, meanwhile, have resulted in new ventures between the parties. This decade they formalized a partnership to obtain funding for silviculture from Forest Renewal B.C. As well, they entered into a fibre exchange agreement, whereby a Band-owned plant was established to manufacture value-added products. The Band's plant now sells to both Slocan and specialized export markets.

The emergence of this thriving business relationship between Nazko and Slocan can be

attributed to seven main factors:

- executive-level support from Slocan and low turnover within its management team;
- ongoing involvement of a core group of Band members who are very experienced in logging and the forest industry;
- high degree of mutual trust;
- capacity of Band to deliver work that meets or exceeds industry standards;
- Band logging activities are operated as a business, without political interference or overlaps;
- common understanding of expectations of contractual work (i.e., there are no frills like "make-work" training programs); and
- the relationship is economically sustainable.

As in all business relationships, there are occasional differences of opinion. These are dealt with as they come up, on a face-to-face basis. Contact: Lloyd White, Slocan Forest Products (250) 992-5581 or Terrence Paul, Nazko Band (250) 992-9085



## *Forest Technician Training Program*

The Forest Technician Training Program (FTTP) is an initiative launched in May, 1997 by the B.C. Ministry of Forests (MOF) in partnership with the aboriginal Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) and the Council of Forest Industries, with funding

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*FTTP participants*

from Forest Renewal B.C. Its goal is twofold: to create a community-based training program for aboriginal people preparing for a career in forestry, and through this, to build new relationships between aboriginal people, forest companies, and government.

The concept for FTTP was established by the First Nations' Forestry Council in 1995. It was originally to be a six-month program, involving three months of classroom study at NVIT's campus in Meritt and three months in



*St'at'imc language program (see page 10)*

on-the-job training within the participants' home communities. However, a second phase was added in January 1998 following enthusiastic feedback. Participants finished the program in July 1998 with a mix of college credits and work experience, motivated to make a difference.

By all accounts, the FTTP started and finished as one of those rare "feel good" pilot projects. Its popularity surpassed all expectations. There were more than 500 applications for the 20 training positions. Forest companies also lined up to participate. In the end, MOF and NVIT coordinated between 10 communities in the Fraser Basin to bring satellite training directly to the people. The training was relevant, because it was both personalized and held on-site within different First Nations' traditional territories.

Prior to start-up, the partnership model underwent some tests. COFI was invited as the third partner when funding cutbacks within MOF

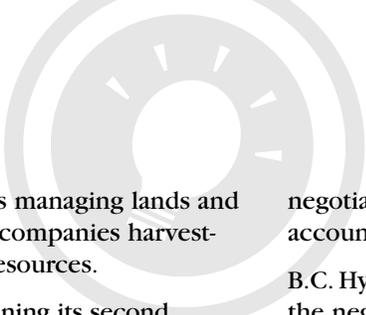
threatened to shelve the program while it was still in the conceptual stage. This re-structuring brought onboard 13 forest licensees as sponsoring companies. Each company appointed a student mentor, which was key to the program's success. The mentors provided a sounding board and anchor between student, instructors and the program coordinator.

Several features contributed to the success of this bold collaboration:

- the partnership was championed within MOF (Barbara Gray-Wiksten);
- two years were dedicated to developing an appropriate partnership model and curriculum;
- project partners had well-defined roles and responsibilities during both start-up and delivery;
- a committed project coordinator was on-call for all participants throughout the program;
- the launching team met personally with all participating companies and students in advance of start-up to set the expectations and tone for the program;
- there was a very 'user-friendly' and inspiring orientation at NVIT, attended by all project partners;
- mentors were chosen on the basis of their strong belief in the program;
- surveys were conducted mid-program to monitor its success among students, mentors and project partners;
- NVIT prepared a resource guide for future implementation of the program;
- MOF completed a final evaluative report, laying out concrete recommendations; and
- evaluations reflected informal and anecdotal feedback.

In terms of benefits to those involved in the partnership, the FTTP provides First Nations with marketable skills that increase their opportunities to find employment in the forest sector. However, the program also provides a number of other shared benefits including:

- providing a trained workforce to fill positions where forest sector companies may be able to provide employment opportunities for aboriginal people; and
- increasing the capacity within aboriginal communities to assess land use and forestry plans and be able to participate in consultation in a meaningful way or to manage reserve and/or treaty settlement lands. Such capacity benefits First



Nations, governments managing lands and resources and forest companies harvest and processing resources.

The FTTP is currently running its second phase of delivery with the participation of 24 Band councils, 18 forest companies, and three forest districts of MOE. The positive lessons from this pilot project will apply across many sectors for years to come. Contact: Craig Noordmans, Ministry of Forests (250) 356-1955

## *B.C. Hydro and St'at'imc Nation*

B.C. Hydro and the St'at'imc Nation are continuing negotiations commenced in 1993, to establish a mutually beneficial business relationship. The relationship between the two parties dates back to 1953 and has seen many changes, from the role of the federal government as intermediary, to a level of direct consultation considered appropriate. Consequently, dialogue has focused on old grievances and misunderstandings as well as opportunities for future cooperation. The ability of the two parties to maintain momentum in the talks, despite this complexity, holds several lessons with regard to partnership building.

The longevity of the negotiations between B.C. Hydro and the St'at'imc people is due largely to their commitment to defining a clear process. The parties agreed on a protocol for the negotiations, before becoming entangled in the issues themselves. This agreement on negotiating principles has functioned something like a marriage, providing a reference point to return to when the going gets tough. It enables the parties to inventory their conduct respectively, and then mediate among themselves, rather than subjecting each and every move to their lawyers for scrutiny. The result is a more immediate and personalized sharing of interests and accountability.

A turning point in the negotiations was 1996, when B.C. Hydro signed a funding agreement to cover the cost of a full-time office and staff for the St'at'imc Nation Hydro Committee, rather than just the cost of meetings. That same year, the parties held a two-day joint planning session for a frank discussion of their respective negotiating constraints and each party's aspirations from the negotiations. Out of this came a joint vision statement, reinforcing the original protocol agreement of 1993. It essentially set "climate goals" for the

negotiations, such as respect, generosity, accountability, and healing.

B.C. Hydro has taken several steps to uphold the negotiating principles, including:

- maintaining a consistent lead negotiator since signing a protocol agreement in 1993;
- agreeing to the resolution of past grievances alongside day-to-day operational questions;
- redirecting its business planning and thinking from purely 'hardware' (i.e., dams) to also include people (i.e., community, shared responsibilities); and
- restructuring its Aboriginal Relations Department to build internal capacity on socio-economic matters, so that it is less reliant on parachuting in a "troubleshooter".

The St'at'imc Nation Hydro Committee has also taken important steps, such as:

- identifying issues of separateness and collaboration among the St'at'imc communities, and effectively delegating between the main negotiating table and community tables;
- distinguishing between operational issues and political issues (e.g., structure of current service contracts vs. structure of future partnerships for fisheries restoration);
- establishing a comprehensive strategic plan, setting out priorities, strategies, responsibilities, etc.; and
- conducting regular self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses as a team, including internal barriers to communication.

For both sides it has been difficult to arrive at agreement on what "mutually beneficial" means (i.e., what the common goals are). However, with the recent agreement on a Strategic Plan, both parties are confident that many of the past grievances can be resolved and a better relationship established. In the meantime, they are testing different ways of working together (e.g., service contracts for security and maintenance). This commitment to carrying the negotiations forward in good faith sets a vital precedent for other partnerships in the Fraser Basin. Contact: Bob Wilmot, BC Hydro (604) 623-4362 or Rodney Louie, St'at'imc Nation Hydro Committee (250) 256-0425

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"This agreement on negotiating principles has functioned something like a marriage, providing a reference point to return to when the going gets tough."

“Lack of an agreed upon process for decision making, as well as a mechanism for conflict resolution, endangered the partnership.”

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## Education

In the Fraser Basin many First Nations are struggling to maintain their languages. This issue is gaining visibility but remains poorly understood, with many people not comprehending the importance of language to culture or sustainability. Among aboriginal peoples, scholars, and professionals working in the field of ecology, language loss is an issue of great concern. Indigenous languages are living libraries of ecosystem knowledge, little of which is known to the broader scientific community. They carry information vital to understanding and protecting shared resources.

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## The St'at'imc Language & Culture Program

In 1988 the *Lillooet Area Indian Education Study* showed that the delivery of education was lacking in key areas, especially in relation to culture and language. Although 45 to 50 per cent of district students were St'at'imc, seldom were St'at'imc speakers invited into the classroom. There was little evidence in the school appearance and staff make-up that nearly one half of the students were St'at'imc.

To address this challenge, the Chiefs established the St'at'imc Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) in 1989 to work with the School District (School District No. 74 - Gold Trail) toward implementing the recommendations contained in the *Study*. The following year, SEAC established a Home/School Liaison Committee to provide a means whereby the communities and schools could work together to ensure quality education programs for First Nations students.

Starting in 1993, targeted education funding was made available to the St'at'imc from the Ministry of Education via the District. However, the process for working together took some time to develop. It remained that the School Board could disregard SEAC decisions. Lack of an agreed upon process for decision making, as well as a mechanism for conflict resolution, endangered the partnership.

In 1996 SEAC approached its political leadership concerning the lack of regard for their advice. In response, the Upper St'at'imc

Chiefs established the St'at'imc Education Authority and delegated to it full responsibility for education. With this formalized body as the point of contact, negotiations could proceed with more certainty.

The Upper St'at'imc Language & Culture Program (USLCP) is demonstrating the slow but priceless work required to bring a language back. Currently, only 5 per cent of upper St'at'imc people fluently speak their language and just three of these individuals are under age 50. To help salvage their language, they decided to bring it into the elementary and high schools. In 1993, they started the St'at'imc Language & Culture Program (SLCP) with the participation and support of School District No. 29 (Lillooet).

Since 1993 seven St'at'imc teachers have been certified to teach the St'at'imc language and are currently teaching in School District No. 74 (Gold Trail). There is an Upper St'at'imc language dictionary being produced. All curriculum developed reinforces both language and culture. For example, the “salmon unit” describes the preparations for fishing, from readying nets to methods of cutting fish. A similar unit is now being developed concerning plants.

Several factors can be attributed to the St'at'imc's partnership with School District No. 74 surviving its growing pains. These include:

- champions of language instruction within the school system who initiated informal classroom teaching of the language and culture;
- history of real consultation between the St'at'imc and the School District to design an effective language program;
- direct involvement of the St'at'imc in program decision making (e.g., hiring of key personnel by the District);
- team approach to problem solving; and
- personal commitment of St'at'imc language teachers to become certified.

The USLCP is now a vital part of education in Lillooet area schools, for both St'at'imc children and their classmates. Contact: Beverly Frank, St'at'imc Nation (250) 256-7441 (Ext. 224).

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## Transportation

Thousands of kilometres of transportation infrastructure such as roads and railways run through the traditional territories of the

Basin's First Nations. This infrastructure supports regional economic activities and the well-being of communities and – when done in collaboration with local communities - can provide an opportunity for the development of partnerships.

## *Bush Creek Restoration Project*

One feature of the 1.2 billion upgrade of the Trans Canada Highway is the widening of the Bush Creek Bridge north of Ladysmith, B.C. A small project undertaken by the Ministry of Transportation and Highways (MoTH) and the Chemainus First Nation (CFN) to restore this construction zone on Oyster Bay Indian Reserve No. 12 is now the topic of increasing interest. It shows how a little imagination can change assumptions about what is doable within a major highway construction project. It also has provided a template that will be utilized in future highway development and upgrade projects in the Fraser Basin.

The Bush Creek Partnership originated in 1997 when CFN elders expressed concern over the impact of highway construction on fish habitat, and asked how MoTH planned to restore the area. The proposed bridge construction would have resulted in the loss of some wetland areas, seasonal home to coho salmon and other culturally important species. Such impacts were expected to affect not only the First Nation's traditional use of the site, but also a nearby cooperative salmon enhancement project between the CFN and the Ladysmith Sportsman's Club.

In the course of conversations between MoTH and the CFN Elders it became clear that an alternative approach to site rehabilitation was possible. MoTH often contours the roadside areas damaged during construction and then seeds them with grasses. Instead, MoTH decided to support and work with the CFN in developing a unique restoration concept. The result was the construction of a network of deep off-channel fish rearing ponds that blend into the landscape. To revegetate the area, more than 61 traditional and medicinal species of significance to the CFN were planted. The growth of a plant canopy around the ponds is consistent with the natural forest cover, giving shade to fish. Right beside the highway, there is now a dynamic ecosystem returning.

Key to this partnership was MoTH's willingness to depart from a more engineered approach. Rather than designing the environmental mitigation program 'in-house', it put together a Restoration Team for Bush Creek comprised of MoTH staff, two Chemainus elders, a fisheries biologist, and an ethnobotanist from the University of Victoria. This group made numerous site visits together, worked to develop plant lists and sources, and explored opportunities to promote environmental education and awareness. Most importantly, CFN youths were active in plant salvaging and revegetating the fish ponds.



The project is a visible success and has been documented on video by MoTH for release to Knowledge Network and other media outlets, and in a research project for the Diploma of Restoration of Natural Systems Program, University of Victoria. In the long-term, the CFN hope to build an ethno-botanical interpretive centre and walking path linking the new ponds with its nearby college, to share aspects of their culture with local visitors and tourists. Strong points of the partnership between MoTH and the CFN include:

- concerns expressed by Elders sparked creative problem solving;
- partnership chain of command was straightforward because MoTH looked to the Elders for direction;
- translation was provided for those Elders not speaking English;
- "experts" played a supporting role rather than lead role (i.e., biologist and ethnobotanist s);

*Bush Creek restoration activities.*

“As of 1998, 20 per cent of “little sisters” were of First Nations ancestry but only one per cent of the women volunteering were aboriginal.”

Program co-ordinator  
Alainise Ferguson  
of Big Sisters.

- involvement of women on the coordinating team making participation by female elders more accessible;
- high regard by the CFN for the ethnobotanist retained by MELP;
- good will went beyond the fine-print of negotiated agreements; and
- cultural protocol for traditional and medicinal plant knowledge was respected.

One possible shortcoming of the partnership is the lack of a long-term commitment for joint monitoring of the project outcome which could be beneficial in applying lessons from this project elsewhere. Nevertheless,



MoTH's hope is to explore utilizing this model for environmental cooperation with First Nations in the Fraser Basin. This opens a whole new way of thinking about sustainable partnerships, in terms of both how they happen and their potential scope. Contact: Nicholas May, Ministry of Transportation and Highways (250) 356-8780.

## *Non-Government Organizations*

In recent years, non-government organizations have increased dramatically both in number and in the diversity of activities in which they engage. Moreover, NGO's, for a variety of reasons have been in the forefront of developing partnerships with First Nations communities. The following are some examples of NGO/First Nation partnerships at work in the Basin.

## *Big Sisters Mentorship Program*

Big Sisters has been active in the Fraser Basin since the 1950s, matching young girls in need with compatible companions and role models. In October 1998 it added a new dimension to its Lower Mainland programming, launching the “First Nations Big Sister Mentoring Program” in partnership with an energetic group of aboriginal professional women.

The mentoring program emerged from the recognition that an imbalance existed in matches involving aboriginal children. As of 1998, 20 per cent of “little sisters” were of First Nations ancestry but only one per cent of the women volunteering were aboriginal. For Big Sisters staff, this underlined the need to develop a different type of outreach. Little girls were asking for someone with whom they could identify.

The program was launched through a playful “Partnership Feast” sponsored by Alcan at the First Nations House of Learning at the University of British Columbia. Participating corporations like Westcoast Energy purchased tabled, sending one or two representatives and sharing the rest of the table with First Nations leaders. Female chiefs were the honored guests, and a handful of male chiefs acted as celebrity servers.

The program is off to an impressive start, backed by the administrative experience and warm approach of Big Sisters. It is not meant to duplicate existing programming, but to embrace aboriginal concepts of mentoring. Normally, young aboriginal girls would hear daily stories from aunts and other women in their extended family. Because many girls living in the city no longer have such exposure to traditional cultural knowledge, Big Sisters is attempting to recreate opportunities for this type of sharing. According to Alainise Ferguson, program coordinator, “For aboriginal

women, the traditional way is to use the whole community to raise a child.”

To get word out about this program on the “mocassin telegraph” between aboriginal communities, Big Sisters has begun to alert aboriginal women that volunteers are needed. This is done by picking up the phone. Everyone contacted is then requested to phone the women in their lives that might be in a position to help, either as a Big Sister or by providing the next round of contacts. “All these women we are put in touch with have relatives, and that’s who we want to talk to.”

A major asset working for Big Sisters in initiating this partnership is its willingness to listen and respond. The organization has paid attention to groundwork, including:

- listening to those it services (i.e., the boys and girls wanting to know their cultural identity);
- establishing a joint Steering Committee with its aboriginal partners;
- hiring an inspiring coordinator who personifies its vision for the program;
- exploring an older set of women than it normally enlists as volunteers, in addition to the usual “over-achieving, whiz-bang young women with hearts of gold”;
- taking its message provincially, to those aboriginal women cycling between the city and their traditional territory;
- planning a Cultural Advisory Board to address concerns and protocol (e.g. ‘what to take into consideration when talking to our elders, who are our most valuable resource as aboriginal peoples’); and
- setting straightforward criteria for success (i.e., if people are talking about the program and enquiring about it, the result is an increase in the number of quality matches).

No doubt, Big Sisters will turn to its aboriginal “little sisters” once more when it is time to evaluate future directions. Contact: Alanaise Ferguson, Big Sisters (Lower Mainland) (604) 873-4525.

## *Tseil-Watuth Nation & Ecotrust Canada*

The Tsleil-Waututh Nation (“TWN”), a Coast Salish nation with 1,864 square kilometres of traditional territory around Burrard Inlet in North Vancouver, has a general ethic of part-

nership which is illustrated by its relationship with Ecotrust Canada, an organization dedicated to building conservation-based economies.

Over the last year and a half, TWN has worked with Ecotrust to enhance its capacity to incorporate broader and more diverse sources of information into regional land management activities. The partnership has matured quickly, due to their trust in one another’s capabilities, and because both are action-oriented.

The collaboration was launched from the foundation of a highly successful mapping program developed in-house by TWN. The Tseil-Watuth utilize a cartography technique called bio-regional mapping. This method essentially enables them to make maps with a cultural face, which describe their traditional territory in an accurate historical sense. It is a ground-breaking approach to integrating scientific and cultural knowledge systems. Each map has explanatory boxes that give insight to key values and issues.

Through its bio-regional mapping capabilities, TWN was able to produce a “bio-regional atlas.” The atlas is a collection of 30 maps telling the story of the Tseil-Watuth people, as documented by elders. According to Michael George, “The atlas makes approaching other regional partners easier, because it tells who we are and why we want to partner.” It is also a powerful demonstration of how common sense can be applied to resolve seemingly complex management challenges. The territory mapped is one of the most urban and developed parts of the Fraser Basin.

Upon completion of the atlas, TWN envisioned translating the information recorded on its bio-regional maps into a form that can be readily condensed, layered or otherwise re-configured, utilizing computerized Geographic Information Systems (GIS). This is how the partnership with Ecotrust began. Ecotrust is providing the technical training to bring this concept to life.

The mapping partnership with Ecotrust is also showing how a “traditional use study” (TUS) can be approached so it stands the test of time. TWN has set out clear documentation procedures, to de-mystify the process from a scientific standpoint, and assure its people that thorough homework has been done. Ecotrust’s experience has been invaluable in this task.

TWN’s success in working with Ecotrust has brought further possibilities for partnership. In 1999 the TWN joined seven other First

“The partnership has matured quickly, due to their trust in one another’s capabilities, and because both are action-oriented.”

“The project has been effective in enhancing the continuity of the trail system but also has a number of benefits related to the development of relationships between local government, First Nations and a broader range of interests.”

Nations to co-host a traditional use workshop on mapping for protected areas. Ecotrust was featured as a speaker, explaining the benefits of different co-management models. Meanwhile, TWN has asked Ecotrust to be part of its technical team on the co-management board for Say Nuth Kaw Yum Park. In this capacity, Ecotrust serves as a resource with regard to the in-progress TUS.

The partnership between the TWN and Ecotrust has succeeded because the parties have invested in relationship building, including:

- dedicating a year to ‘getting to know you’ sessions before committing to a project;
- testing their relationship through a specific contract, i.e., training, before expanding it into broader collaboration;
- signing a protocol agreement to define their expectations and terms for working together;
- sharing a commitment to create livelihood options that are compatible with Tsleil-Waututh culture;
- seeing their partnership as evolving, with room for new targets as initial goals are achieved;
- delegating tasks according to strengths, e.g., Ecotrust agreed to undertake the fund-raising for joint work since it already has an established network of international contacts;
- looking inside for answers instead of outside, e.g., opting for ‘at home’ training instead of a classroom in order to honour and reinforce Tsleil-Waututh values; and
- cultivating a sense of fun in the partnership.

Contact: Michael George, Tsleil-Waututh Nation (604) 929-3454 or Erin Kellog, Ecotrust (604) 682-4141.

## Local Government

Local governments and First Nations share much in common. In addition to proximity to one another, both have limited resources (i.e., people and money) relative to their responsibilities and both are close to the ground and in constant dialogue with the communities that they serve. In this context, local government/First Nations relationships represent a significant opportunity to redefine the way in which aboriginal and non-aboriginal people can partner with one another.

## GVRD, City of Abbotsford and the Matsqui First Nation – Matsqui Trail Regional Park

In recent years, local government and citizens in the Fraser Valley have been attempting to develop a trail from Sumas Mountain to Fort Langley - now referred to as the Fraser Valley Regional Trail. In June of 1996, the City of Abbotsford and GVRD Parks entered into an agreement with the Matsqui First Nations for a six-metre wide trail corridor (2.3 km in length) through the Matsqui Indian Reserve. This corridor secures a trail connection between Matsqui Trail Regional Park and Olund Park and will form part of the route of the Trans Canada Trail.

The development of the trail has been guided by the Matsqui Trail Extension Focus Group which includes representatives of the three signatories to the agreement plus community interests such as the Central Valley Naturalists, Backcountry Horsemen, Mt. Lehman Community Association, Mennonite Central Committee and individuals representing different recreational user groups. Development of the trail has been assisted by the provincial Environmental Youth Teams which employs young people including some youth from the Matsqui First Nation.

Under the terms of the agreement, the GVRD will construct, maintain, manage and operate a non-profit wilderness trail for public use. The GVRD maintains an insurance of not less than \$1 million to finance liability claims for loss or injury incurred by users of the trail.

Wendy DaDalt (GVRD Parks) believes that the project has been effective in enhancing the continuity of the trail system but also has a number of benefits related to the development of relationships between local government, First Nations and a broader range of interests. Contact: Wendy Dadalt, GVRD Parks (604) 530-4983.

## TNRD/Lower Nicola Band - Fire Protection Services

Communities in rural parts of the Basin - with low population densities - are often challenged to provide services to residents in a cost-effective manner. As a result, such services are often shared between a number of communities. For example a number of aboriginal communities access - on a fee-for-service basis - various services provided by adjacent local governments. However, in the case of the Thompson Nicola Regional District (TNRD) it is an aboriginal community sharing its resources with local government. An agreement between the TNRD and the Lower Nicola Band, ensures access to fire protection services, for rural residents of Electoral Area A. In addition, the Bands also provide medical first responder, vehicle road rescue and steep slope rescue services, to sections of highway 97C and 8, through an agreement with BC Ambulance and Provincial Emergency Preparedness (PEP). The services are provided by 22 volunteer fire fighters supported by three full-time staff. The volunteers are a mix of aboriginal and non-aboriginal residents of the region with approximately 50% of the volunteers being female. Additional community members are involved as Auxiliary Fire Fighters who provide care for children where the primary care giver is called to an fire or emergency. Contact: Thompson-Nicola Regional District (250) 377-8673 or Lower Nicola Fire Department, Peter Meadon (250) 378-5110.

## Tools and Forums for Partnership Building

### Business at the Summit

Over the last five years Business at The Summit has provided an important forum where business and First Nations interests in British Columbia discuss partnership opportunities and work to strengthen First Nations/business relationships. The event is designed to provide "positive and productive face-to-face dialogue" and features sessions on First Nations/business partnerships in a range of sectors from forestry to tourism and eco-

nomie development. Workshop sessions are key to the relationship building aspect of this event and include innovative approaches such as role playing scenarios where First Nations and business interests change roles.

Conference Co-Chairs Brian Smith (Chair, BC Hydro) and Danny Watts (Co-Chair First Nations Summit) believe that the success of the event can be attributed to a real desire by senior leaders from both communities to build new bridges independent of government. "Leaders from both communities have stepped forward", said BC Hydro Chair Brian Smith. "They have recognized the need to build new lines of communication and stronger relationships, and from those relationships, new partnerships".

While the federal and provincial governments are strong supporters of this event, it is the involvement, participation and cooperation of First Nations and businesses that actually drive it", said Danny Watts of the First Nations Summit. "The business community has bought into the idea in a very impressive way."

### CMAR

The Centre for Municipal Aboriginal Relations (CMAR) in Ottawa, is a joint initiative of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Indian Taxation Advisory Board. A steering committee, with representation from both organizations guides the operations of the Centre which opened in January 1997. CMAR promotes positive, practical and effective relations between aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities, and provides a clearing house for information such as model agreements. It also conducts research, develops best practices documents and policy and working papers to guide the discussion of issues as well as organizes seminars, workshops and conferences on issues of mutual concerns to aboriginal communities and local government. Contact: Centre for Municipal-Aboriginal Relations, Lorne Building 90 Elgin Street Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0H4

### LMTAC

The Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee (LMTAC) works to coordinate and represent the interests of 26 municipal and regional governments in the Lower Mainland area treaty negotiations. LMTAC deals primari-

## Partnerships and Treaties

The BC Treaty Process is an important process for helping aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities to re-define their relationships. Currently, there are 17 First Nations involved in the BCTC process in the Fraser Basin. The partnerships explored in this document will be necessary to complete and implement treaties. For First Nations not participating in the BCTC process, and look towards alternative processes (i.e., Union of BC Indian Chiefs), the partnerships like those considered in this document may provide direction on building long-term effective working relationships in the absence of formal treaties.



Lower Nicola Band training exercise.

## About the Fraser Basin Council

The Fraser Basin Council (FBC) is a not-for-profit, charitable organization established in 1997 to educate on the need for sustainability of the Fraser Basin, and consists of 36 directors from federal, provincial, local and First Nations governments as well as non-government interests throughout the Fraser Basin.

The work of the Council is undertaken by a staff based in different regions of the Basin. The role of the Fraser Basin Council is to facilitate dialogue, seek solutions and encourage the development of new models of cooperative decision-making that balance social, economic and environmental values. By examining the examples outlined in this document, the Council believes that aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities can more quickly make the transition to partnerships that support the sustainability of the Basin.

ly with urban-based local governments and acts as a full member of the provincial treaty negotiating team, providing treaty advice from a community perspective.

LMTAC also provides support services to member local governments dealing with broader Aboriginal issues such as land management, servicing, inter-governmental relations and communications with First Nations. On-going LMTAC initiatives include information gathering, research and analysis, presentations and various targeted communications activities. Contact: David Didluck, LMTAC (604) 451-6179

### Inventory of Local Government Service Agreements

The Lower Mainland Treaty Advisory Committee (LMTAC) is developing an inventory of service agreements between local governments and First Nations in the Lower Mainland. The inventory will serve as a resource tool and provide potential models for future contractual agreements on a variety of local services from libraries to street maintenance. Compilation of the inventory is ongoing and expected to be completed in Summer 2000. Contact: David Didluck, LMTAC, (604) 451-6179

### UBCM Community to Community Forums

In the summer of 1999 the Union of BC Municipalities, with support from the federal and provincial governments, launched the regional Community to Community Forum initiative which provides provincial government funding to adjacent local governments and First Nations wanting to forge stronger working relationships. The initiative builds upon a provincial Community to Community forum organized jointly by the UBCM and the First Nations Summit in January 1997. To date seven local government/First Nations partnerships have submitted proposals for holding a forum. Contact Alison McNeil, UBCM (604)-270-8226.

## Summary

Where are aboriginal and non-aboriginal partnerships going in the future? The examples explored in this document show that there are communities and people moving beyond fear and mistrust into an era of shared objectives and joint responsibility. While the partnerships are – by the admission of the partners – imperfect, they have enjoyed some success in

redefining how aboriginal and non-aboriginal communities can live and work together. Not surprisingly the partnerships share a number of characteristics which have long been known as essential to the development and maintenance of good working relationships between any group of people. These include:

- mutual awareness - actions by each partner are based on knowledge, instead of assumptions, of one another's perspectives, motivations, and values;
- communication - partners make an effort to appreciate one another's interests through open and honest dialogue;
- respect - partners consider the impact of their actions on their relationship and work to ensure that their actions demonstrate respect for each others interests, values and perspectives;
- trust - partners in effective working relationships trust one another.

While assessing the "effectiveness" or "success" of such partnerships is largely subjective, Sloan and Hill (1995)<sup>1</sup> offer some observations about successful partnerships which can help to evaluate aboriginal/non-aboriginal partnerships over the long term:

"As Henry Ford once observed, "Coming together is a beginning; staying together is progress; working together is success." A partnership will work only if there is real sharing of responsibilities. All partners must seek to be part of key management decisions, however small their stake in the partnership. It is also important to recognize that many partnerships evolve into something different."

The Fraser Basin Council thanks its funding partners and those who gave their time to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their partnerships. The Council recognizes that a great deal more is being done and is interested learning about other partnerships in the Fraser Basin that can be profiled in the Council's regular newsletter. Comments and questions should be directed to Malcolm Smith, Basin-Wide Program Coordinator (604) 605-3454 (msmith@fraserbasin.bc.ca).



*1. Sloan, Pamela and R. Hill. 1995. Corporate Aboriginal Relations: Best Practice Case Studies. Hill Sloan Associates Inc.*