

Come Together Alberta
Dec 1 and 2, 2011

AUMA

A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in a teal color, located at the bottom right of the slide.

The role of policy in opening a community to aboriginal communities and immigrants

Williams Lake – a CMARD Community



Agenda

- ◆ Context
- ◆ Three key components
- ◆ Lessons learned



Context

- ◆ Town in the midst of economic upheaval with the reduction of employment in the forest industry.
- ◆ 3 hours from Kamloops, 2.5 hours from Prince George.
- ◆ South Asian community employed in the lumber mills/logging



First Nations

- ◆ City is within the boundary of the Secwepemc and neighbours two bands.
- ◆ Home to many Chilcotins
- ◆ Commercial, education and service center for on and off-reserve aboriginals throughout the Chilcotin and Cariboo region.
- ◆ 14% of the City of Williams Lake and 24% of the School District student population



In 2010

- ◆ City had signed CMARD but had taken no actions.
- ◆ No identified FN person working for the City.
- ◆ No South Asian staff person but one City Counsellor.
- ◆ Racist comments in the press and discrimination of FN in some stores.
- ◆ No recognition by the City of its location or heritage of the City.
- ◆ Stampede main fully integrated community event with strong presence of FN.
- ◆ As in many Northern community, medical staff has a large percentage of South Africans, South Asian and newcomers to Canada.

Three key components

1. The development of a new Official Community Plan incorporating sustainability principles.
2. People: Mayor and Council, FN leadership, City staff including RCMP leadership.
3. Emerging divisive issue with potential for violence.

The development of a new Official Community Plan incorporating sustainability principles.

- ◆ Opportunity for far ranging community dialogue, engagement and consultations.
- ◆ Opportunity for recognizing contributions of FN and immigrants from different perspectives.
- ◆ Opportunity to dialogue with staff and gain their commitment.
- ◆ Opportunity for integrating principles of diversity into many policies.



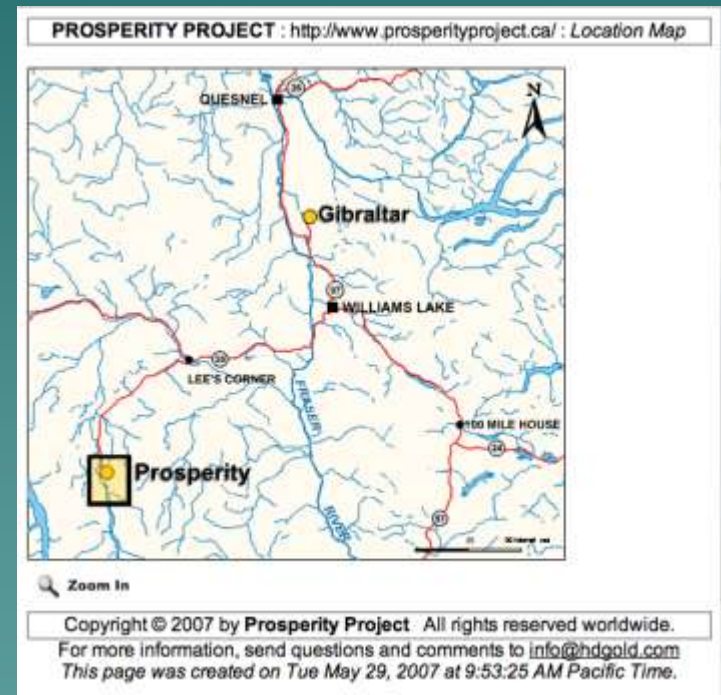
People

- ◆ Mayor and Council
- ◆ First Nation leadership
- ◆ City staff including RCMP
- ◆ School District already engaged



Immerging divisive issue with potential for violence

- ◆ Prosperity Mine approval process.
- ◆ Community divided – city hall supporting.
- ◆ Economic potential especially for small businesses.
- ◆ Strong environmental mouvement within the non aboriginal community in Williams Lake.
- ◆ Lack of meaningful dialogue by the mine proponents.



Official Community Plan


- ◆ Sets policies for municipalities.
- ◆ Guides planners, and all city staff.
- ◆ Council must make decisions congruent with the OCP, if not need to amend OCP.
- ◆ Public document that has to be adopted by Council after a Public Hearing.

Key policy areas within the OCP

- ◆ Separate section on FN partnership.
- ◆ Under Social Wellbeing, separate policies – anti-racism and cultural diversity.
- ◆ Under Arts, Culture, and Heritage specific mention of FN.
- ◆ Under Resilient Economy specific mention of FN economic activities.

Sample policies

- ◆ Consider incorporating the local FN languages in signage and other promotional materials for the City.
- ◆ Conduct a diversity survey of staff and revise HR policies.
- ◆ Adopt a policy of recognizing the traditional territory of the Secwepemc in community events and official functions.
- ◆ Over time work to incorporate local FN art into City Hall and other public facilities.
- ◆ Revisit existing policies, programs, and strategies to ensure that FN needs, ideas, and opportunities are identified.

- ◆ In partnership with the local FN bands, support the development of a traditional harbour in the Stampede ground.
 - ◆ In partnership with the School District and the local college, encourage the development of local aboriginal language classes for non-aboriginal people.
 - ◆ Work on partnership and establishing closer communication linkages with the WL Indian Band and Soda Creek Indian Band on economic development opportunities and projects.
 - ◆ Work with the local FN communities to preserve, protect and celebrate local FN art.
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Lessons learned

- ◆ A holistic approach is needed, not through a single lens. Municipal planning documents can provide an holistic approach.
- ◆ Diversity and becoming an inclusive and welcoming municipality is not to be seen as only “a social” department area but must be integrated through all of the departments and services.
- ◆ Leadership is key from people **willing to take risk** at the political, community and staff level.
- ◆ Allies are sometimes found in unexpected places i.e.. Utilities or waste management.
- ◆ Allow time to get buy in from staff and council before the document is made public. However involve key stakeholders in the specific policies.

- ◆ Sometimes a divisive event allows a community to come together and realize that things need to change.
- ◆ Law enforcement must be on side.
- ◆ No short term fix, need a long term approach. Don't use outside consultants unless there is funds to sustain staffing in the long term.
- ◆ Include easily achievable policies and begin thinking about implementation as you develop the policies. Don't wait to begin making change on non legislative or budget actions.
- ◆ Best to begin policy work before the there are critical issues. Staff who are cultural competent and HR policies that support diversity help to limit the possibility of crisis.

Final thoughts

- ◆ The endorsement in the recently held municipal election of the Mayor by FN tribal councils even if they noted they disagreed with her position on Prosperity Mine.
- ◆ The reelection of the Mayor and South Asian Councillor.
- ◆ A FN candidate nearly got elected opening the door for a successful candidate next election.
- ◆ Involvement and support of FN for Communities that Care, an approach to limit risk factors in youth.
- ◆ An increasing number of new immigrants making their home in WL from Asia adding to the mix of Europeans, Foreign Temporary Workers and South Asians.

Sources

- ◆ <http://new.williamslake.ca/index.asp?p=1933> for the OCP.
- ◆ mckitrick@strathcona.ca
- ◆ ldragowska@williamslake.ca