

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 08, 2026

**Statement from John Jack, Chair of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District
Regarding reconciliation work**

As Chair of the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, I think it is important to provide some context about the role reconciliation plays in our organization and why investing in cultural learning opportunities for staff matters. Questions about how public resources are used are fair, and accountability is an important part of local government. At the same time, it is essential to understand reconciliation is an active responsibility, not a passive concept.

The ACRD is unique because Maa-nulth Nations hold voting seats on our board and participate alongside other local governments in regional decision-making. We are also in the territories of 10 Nuuchahnulth Nations. The relationship we have with these nations is the result of years of work, mutual respect, and a commitment to building stronger partnerships between local governments and First Nations. For our staff to serve the public effectively, they need to understand not only the communities they work with, but also the cultures, histories, and perspectives of the Indigenous governments that are our partners.

The ACRD has made our relationship with First Nations a priority across many aspects of our work, it is overtly expressed in our strategic plan ([link here](#)). That commitment extends from inclusive governance at the board table, to supporting legislative change, to land-based partnerships, emergency response coordination, and building stronger working relationships between First Nations and local governments. These efforts involve elected officials, staff, and the public because reconciliation requires people to work, learn, and build trust together. Reconciliation is something you do, it is an action. Reconciliation cannot be reduced to a policy document or box you need to check off.

Activities such as canoe paddling, drum-making workshops, and other cultural learning experiences, which ACRD staff have taken part in over the last five years, are opportunities for staff to learn directly from Indigenous knowledge keepers, community members, and cultural leaders. These learning experiences are consistent with how knowledge is shared. The land, the water, and the activity are, in-effect, the classroom. Investing in cultural learning strengthens understanding, builds respectful relationships, and provides staff with a deeper appreciation of the communities they serve.

Just one week ago, more than 1,000 people gathered in Port Alberni to mark the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. Survivors, families, Indigenous and non-Indigenous leaders, residents, and organizations came together to demonstrate that reconciliation remains important to people throughout this region. The ACRD also contributed \$10,000 to this year's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation event, and many ACRD staff volunteered their personal time to help make the event a success. That participation reflects a genuine commitment by our staff to engage with this work beyond their regular responsibilities. That level of participation reflects a growing understanding in our organization that reconciliation is both a shared responsibility and commonly held value.

Ultimately, what we are doing is building relationships that should have been built generations ago. For too long, Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities were separated by policies and systems that

created division, misunderstanding, and harm. People cannot care about one another if they do not understand one another, and understanding does not develop without relationships based in respect.

I understand that residents expect accountability for public expenditures. Transparency is important, and people are entitled to discuss whether programs deliver value. At the same time, we must continue to remind everyone that context and intent and outcomes matter, and they matter together. Doing something as important as building and maintaining productive and lasting relationships with Indigenous communities and people. A recent article did not have accurate information regarding the way in which the costs were covered, how those costs compare to similar non-Indigenous initiatives, nor did it accurately state the number of participants. As the appropriate spokesperson for the ACRD, I would like to point out the importance of that vital context in the maintenance of those relationships with our Indigenous colleagues, friends, and relatives.

Staff had invited the press to meet with the people involved in these initiatives, and through that we would show that there is value in them, especially when classroom-based approaches cost significantly more. Lacking that vital context in reporting we may inadvertently create controversy based on a false choice between reconciliation and fiscal responsibility. The aims and objectives of such reporting is best when it includes that context especially when anti-Indigenous sentiment looks to be on the upswing.

Reconciliation requires meaningful action rather than symbolic gestures. For an organization that works daily with First Nations governments and communities, investing in cultural competency and relationship-building is part of serving the public effectively.

The Alberni-Clayoquot region has become a recognized leader in collaborative governance because of the relationships that have been built between local governments and First Nations. The collaborative relationships that exist today between First Nations and local governments throughout the Alberni-Clayoquot region have been intentionally built over many years, and they continue to make our communities stronger, more resilient, and better able to address the challenges we face together.

As Chair, I believe reconciliation is strengthened through understanding, and understanding is strengthened through direct experience. While there will always be discussion about how best to achieve that goal, our commitment to building respectful relationships with Indigenous partners and communities remains an essential part of the work of the ACRD.

It is important to note that the ACRD Policy identifies the ACRD Board Chair as the primary spokesperson for the Regional District on all regional matters. The Chair is authorized to release information on behalf of the District and provide comments and interviews to media on all Board matters such as decisions and outcomes arrived at by the board. If the Chair is unavailable, the spokesperson will be designated by the Chair or the Chief Administrative Officer. To ensure media inquiries are directed to the appropriate spokesperson, members of the media are asked to contact Communications Coordinator Heather Thomson (250-206-5162 or hthomson@acrd.bc.ca), and she will coordinate availability of the Chair or their designated delegate.

Chief Councillor John Jack
Chair, Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District