

Esquimalt Nation



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## **ESQUIMALT NATION & SONGHEES NATION WELCOME CURTIS GRAD TO LEAD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NON-PROFIT**

**Victoria, British Columbia:** Esquimalt Nation Chief Andy Thomas and Songhees Nation Chief Ron Sam announced today that Curtis Grad has accepted a contract position to formally launch Skwin'ang'eth Selas Development Company (SSD Co.), a federal not-for-profit corporation that was incorporated last December to promote economic development opportunities for the Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation communities. Curtis Grad will be leaving his position as President & CEO of Greater Victoria Harbour Authority in early December and will immediately assume executive leadership of Skwin'ang'eth Selas, which means "Helping Hand" in Coast Salish Lekwungen dialect.

The non-profit corporation, SSD Co., was established in December 2013 jointly by the Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation and Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA) with equal representation on its Board of Directors.

“Victoria Harbour is the Traditional Territory of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and the spirit of Skwin’ang’eth Selsa was envisioned in 2002 when the GVHA was created,” explained Esquimalt Chief Andy Thomas. “We have been patiently looking for creative ways to advance economic opportunities for the Nations for well over a decade since we became founding members of the GVHA, and SSD Co. is the vehicle that will enable our young people to return to the harbour to create livelihoods. With Curtis onboard to help us get SSD Co. off the ground, we look forward to fostering meaningful long-term First Nations engagement in the broader regional harbour economy.”

“The purpose of SSD Co. is to be a catalyst for the creation of Aboriginal owned businesses and, by extension, the promotion of Aboriginal employment and mentoring opportunities,” explained Songhees Chief Ron Sam. “The future prosperity of Songhees Nation rests with our youth. In order to fully participate in the economies of our Traditional Territories, our citizens need work experience, and hands on support that includes the development of business management expertise. Curtis has the proven skills and has earned our trust over the past three years during his time at the GVHA. We are very pleased that he will be joining SSD Co., and dedicating his talents to putting form and function to our vision of a future where opportunity and prosperity on Victoria harbour is shared with the Nations.”

The SDC’s bylaws call for a minimum of three directors and a maximum of nine to serve on the SSD Co. Board. The initial Directors selected to serve are:

- Lyle Henry, Songhees Nation
- Tim Power, Esquimalt Nation
- Stewart Johnston, GVHA – former Chair & Life Member

Success for Skwin’ang’eth Se’las will be measured by the creation of sustainable local businesses owned and operated by Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation community members. The new corporation will also emphasize and promote the long history and rich culture of the First Nations in the region.

Skwin’ang’eth Se’las Development Corporation will be setting up offices with VIA TeC at Fort Tectoria to build on the synergies of being close to other entrepreneurs and innovators on a daily basis. “We are thrilled to welcome SSD Co. into our incubator hub,” said Dan Gunn, Executive Director of VIA Tec. “While cultural awareness of Aboriginal people is growing, this opportunity to establish meaningful mentoring alliances of mutual benefit, and to strengthen understanding of the potential for new business markets and opportunities is very exciting for us. We look forward to working with Curtis, the Nations, and to incubating the incubator.”

“I am honoured to join the Songhees Nation and Esquimalt Nation to help with the business mechanics of setting up the Skwin’ang’eth Se’las Development Company,” said Curtis Grad. “Advancing economic development for the Nations is something I’m very passionate about and it was the catalyst for the creation of SSD Co. last year. I feel honoured and privileged to take on this new role with the Nations

and GVHA, as true partners in this exciting and innovative enterprise, to identify and foster new business partnerships and opportunities. My 3+ years with Greater Victoria Harbour Authority have been incredibly fulfilling. I truly enjoyed my time working with the GVHA Board and broader community to advance the shared goals and vision for the Victoria Harbour team and I take tremendous pride in the team's accomplishments. GVHA has matured as an organization, due in large part to the dedication of its management team and staff, and it is well positioned for its next leader to chart GVHA's direction for the decades to come."

Curtis Grad begins work on a part time basis with SSD Co. in early December and will take the next several months to establish an office in Fort Tectoria, assessing marketing potential, meeting with the economic development officers at the Esquimalt Nation and Songhees Nation and working with the SSD Co. Board on developing the strategic direction for the new organization.

### ***Esquimalt Nation***

*The Esquimalt Nation is a small nation with approximately 150 members living on reserve and another 100 living off reserve. Off reserve members live in Victoria, in other parts of Vancouver Island and BC, Alberta, and in a number of communities in Washington State.*

*The Esquimalt and Songhees, collectively known as Lekwungen, had their permanent villages on Vancouver Island. These traditional territories extended to Metchosin, Esquimalt, Goldstream, James Bay, Fairfield and Mount Douglas. In the summers, the Esquimalt would travel to various fishing sites on Henry and the San Juan islands. Today, the Nation's reserve lands are located at the southwestern edge of the City of Victoria, bordering the Songhees Nation reserve, and the Town of View Royal.*

<http://www.esquimaltnation.ca>

## **Songhees Nation**

*For over 4000 years, the area now known as the City of Victoria and the local territories, waterways and islands were occupied by ancestors of the people who became known as the Songhees Nations. The Songhees people still maintain the right to fish, hunt and gather food on their traditional territories.*

*The main Songhees community lives on the Songhees Reserve, bordering of the Township of Esquimalt. The Songhees Nation is self-governed and a member of the Te'mexw Treaty Association.*

*On January 22, 2014, the Nation hosted the Grand Opening of the Songhees Wellness Centre. The stunning green-design building will be a focal point for community activities and an opportunity to connect with the region. The new \$24 million facility, independently funded and financed by the Nation, is the realization of a long held dream for a community gathering place with space for sports and education, recreation programs.*

<http://songheesnation.ca>

## **Greater Victoria Harbour Authority**

*Greater Victoria Harbour Authority (GVHA) is a not-for-profit corporation governed by a local Board of Directors, which is accountable to GVHA's nine Member Agencies including; the Capital Regional District, City of Victoria, Esquimalt Nation, Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, the Provincial Capital Commission, Songhees Nation, Tourism Victoria, Township of Esquimalt; and the Victoria/Esquimalt Harbour Society. It owns and operates deep water, marina and upland holdings throughout Victoria's harbour including the large vessel Ogden Point port facility, Victoria's renowned Fisherman's Wharf, and the inner harbour's luxury yacht and marine tourism facility at Ship Point. GVHA's vision is a harbour where people live, learn, work and play; a spectacular gateway into Victoria's past and into its future, monumental in look and feel, linking communities and all people together.*

[gvha.ca](http://gvha.ca)