

2016 COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNER

Teslin Tlingit Council & Village of Teslin, YT



Teslin, Yukon is a century-old village located at mile 804 on the Alaska Highway. Teslin is home to the Teslin Tlingit Council (TTC), an inland, self-governing First Nation that migrated up the Taku River from the coast of Alaska, armed with a comprehensive land claim settlement. The Village of Teslin (VOT) is one of eight municipal governments of the Yukon with a small, active community of 450 people. Hunting and fishing play a key role in the lives of the people who live there.

Teslin's modern economy plays a huge role for these communities in the area of cultural tourism and recreational fishing and hunting. Approximately one third of residents are employed by TTC, VOT or the Yukon government.

The Teslin Community Development Plan 2015-2025 was formalized in 2014 by VOT and TTC. The 10-year plan was approved at a community-wide meeting and put into effect during the 2015-2016 fiscal year. The plan provides framework for projects that will occur during the next 10 fiscal years and is a great example of sustainable community economic development, characterized by its commitment to SERV: social responsibility, ecological sensitivity, cultural respect and economic viability. The goal of the plan is to guarantee people in the community are able to meet their basic needs, support healthy lifestyles, develop a diverse and sustainable economy, cultivate environmental sustainability and enhance and improve knowledge, skills, capacities and capabilities in the community.

In the first year of implementation, the plan created over 110 jobs for local residents, produced 66 contracts for local suppliers and entrepreneurs and generated approximately \$7.5 million in new funding for community infrastructure projects.

The collaboration between a first nation and a municipality like TTC and VOT is innovative and a great example of the benefits that are realized when communities come together with a shared vision and become 'stronger together'.

Prior to the ten-year plan, TTC and VOT were previously working together under another name on their first sustainability plan. Through that collaboration, TTC and VOT saw the benefits of working together, but they faced some obstacles. There is often a learning curve when partnering with others and sometimes the benefits of collaboration were overshadowed in order to fit within the rules and regulations in place by one funding body or another. Since that first joint venture, a steering committee was pulled together which resulted in the creation of a ten-year plan.

The Teslin Community Development Plan 2015-2025 offers hope and promise. It is a plan based on respect for others and many communities can look to this partnership as a model of what can be accomplished through team building, community collaboration and political will.