

Memo

To: Mayor and Council
From: Cameron Scott, Acting Director of Planning
Date: June 8, 2026
Subject: Staff Response to Songhees Nation Letter on Quadra McKenzie Plan

PURPOSE

This Memo provides a response to the letter dated May 22, 2026, from Songhees Nation regarding the Quadra McKenzie Plan (QMP). It outlines how the concerns raised are being addressed, in part, through the QMP's existing policy direction, and identifies additional opportunities to advance this work through implementation of the QMP and other initiatives.

DISCUSSION

The Songhees Nation letter has raised concerns regarding recognition of ləkʷəŋən Aboriginal Rights, protection of qʷłəʔəl (camas) food systems and qʷłəʔəlʔənək (Garry Oak ecosystems), cumulative effects of development, and the need for meaningful consultation and long-term stewardship.

Staff recognize the importance of these concerns and note that the Quadra McKenzie Plan responds to these issues at a strategic level. It is important to consider that, as a policy document within a defined geographic area of Saanich, there are inherent limitations in what the QMP can address. Other Provincial and District of Saanich plans and processes are better positioned to more concretely make progress on the issues raised by the Songhees Nation.

Quadra McKenzie Plan Directions

The Quadra McKenzie Plan, in conjunction with the Official Community Plan, provides higher level direction through broad land use and environmental objectives and policies. Topic specific plans, such as the Urban Forest Strategy, informed the development of the QMP, and will serve to provide more detailed actions to address key issues. Additionally, specific site conditions will be analyzed and addressed through the development application process.

The QMP contains significant environmental content at the objective / policy level. Notably, the QMP has benefited from the recent adoption of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the Urban Forest Strategy. These strategies included

rigorous analysis, identification of key environmental assets, and District-wide policy directions. The Quadra McKenzie Plan (QMP) reinforces this direction by including policies that protect and enhance environmental features, support urban forest and green infrastructure objectives, and guide growth in a way that is more coordinated. A key element of this is the inclusion of Habitat Sites identified in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. These sites, which are fully mapped in the QMP, are assigned Special Site designations, which will ensure additional consideration of environmental values and/or alternative development approaches are incorporated should these sites be considered for redevelopment.

The concerns raised by Songhees Nation emphasize that Garry Oak ecosystems should be considered at the ecosystem level, rather than only through protection of individual trees or isolated features. Staff note that the QMP's direction related to connected open spaces, green networks, and environmental quality is consistent with this broader systems approach. However, broader Provincial, regional, and municipal approaches are needed to truly look at the best ecosystem-level approaches.

Implementation Initiatives

The Songhees Nation letter highlighted the need for cumulative effects assessment, ecosystem threshold identification, restoration priorities, and responsive management measures. These are important matters, but they are not typically resolved through high-level Centre, Corridor and Village plans. In staff's view, implementation activities provide more practical and effective mechanisms to advance this work.

Quadra McKenzie Plan Implementation

As a long-range area plan, the QMP is intended to provide strategic policy direction, including in the areas of environmental stewardship and land management. Implementation of the QMP could provide an opportunity to further respond to the concerns raised by Songhees Nation in a way that is tied to specific actions and operational tools. This may include:

- Review of development-related tools to improve consideration of ecological sensitivity, connectivity, and restoration opportunities.
- Integration of ecological objectives into public realm, park, and infrastructure planning within the Plan area; and
- Development of monitoring and reporting approaches for environmental outcomes associated with growth and redevelopment.

Agriculture and Food Security Plan Update

The just initiated Agriculture and Food Security Plan update provides an additional opportunity to address the food systems dimensions of the concerns raised in the Songhees Nation letter. The letter makes clear that q^wtaʔəl (camas) food systems should not be understood only as ecological features, but also as living cultural and food systems connected to stewardship, harvesting, and intergenerational knowledge. Staff consider that this broader perspective aligns more directly with the scope of the

Agriculture and Food Security Plan update than with the land use framework of the QMP. The Agriculture and Food Security Plan could provide an opportunity to consider:

- How Indigenous food systems and culturally significant plant systems can be better recognized in municipal food systems policy.
- How ecological health and biodiversity contribute to food security; and
- How food systems planning can be better aligned with reconciliation and biodiversity objectives.

Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Urban Forest Strategy Implementation

Saanich's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and the Urban Forest Strategy are likely the most appropriate avenues for responding to the ecosystem-related concerns raised by Songhees Nation. This work can support more detailed attention to:

- Garry Oak ecosystem enhancement and restoration priorities.
- Ecological connectivity.
- Tree retention, protection, and planting on public lands.
- Monitoring indicators and measurable stewardship objectives on public land.
- Outreach and educational support for stewardship on private land; and
- Related adaptive management approaches.

While these strategies provide the frameworks for helping to address these concerns, future decisions by Council will determine the timing, resourcing, and nature of implementation activities. The provincial housing mandates and associated requirements also must be considered in implementing any of these stewardship and ecological enhancement initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The Quadra McKenzie Plan provides strategic policy direction that will help to address Songhees Nation concerns. Notably, the identification of higher-level policy objectives and the inclusion of habitat sites ensures that the areas of highest ecological value are identified and given greater consideration in planning and re-development processes. The more detailed matters raised in the letter are best advanced through implementation of the Quadra McKenzie Plan, the Agriculture and Food Security Plan update, and implementation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. Together, these processes, in conjunction with ongoing relationship building with the Songhees Nation, provide the most practical path to strengthen stewardship and respond to the concerns raised.

Alfonso Molina

From: Cameron Scott
Sent: Tuesday, June 2, 2026 3:56 PM
To: Alfonso Molina
Subject: FW: (External Email) Songhees Nation Letter to Saanich Council Regarding QMP
Attachments: Letter to Saanich Council on QMP.pdf

From: Andrew Easson <andrew.easson@Songheesnation.com>
Sent: Monday, May 25, 2026 2:52 PM
To: Cameron Scott <Cameron.Scott@saanich.ca>
Cc: Chief & Council <chiefandcouncil@songheesnation.com>; Cheryl Bryce <Cheryl.Bryce@songheesnation.com>
Subject: (External Email) Songhees Nation Letter to Saanich Council Regarding QMP

This email sent from outside the District of Saanich. Use caution if message is unexpected or sender is not known to you.

Hello Cam,

Please see the attached letter for Saanich Council regarding the vote on the Quadra Mackenzie Plan in tonight's council meeting.

All the best,

Andrew Easson
Land Referrals Guardian



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Songhees Nation



May 22, 2026

District of Saanich Council

The Songhees Nation Land & Environment Department would like to reassert Chief Sam's statement (February 2nd, 2026):

Songhees Nation's connection to q^wł^aʔ^əl (camas) food systems and q^wł^aʔ^əlʔ^ənək (Garry Oak ecosystems) remains deeply rooted in our ancestry, cultural practices, stewardship responsibilities, and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and rights. These food systems are not simply ecological features, they are living cultural artifacts that reflect Indigenous laws, governance, food sovereignty, and the stewardship of our ancestors, particularly women and family groups who sustained them over countless generations.

Today, only an estimated 1–3% of undisturbed q^wł^aʔ^əl food systems remain within the Capital Regional District. Despite this severe decline, Songhees people continue to rely on these ecosystems for traditional foods, medicines, harvesting practices, cultural teachings, and ecological stewardship.

The Quadra McKenzie Plan (QMP) fails to adequately recognize lək^wəŋən Aboriginal Rights and does not provide meaningful protection for the q^wł^aʔ^əl food system from ongoing development pressures. The proposed land use framework continues patterns of fragmentation and loss affecting a critically endangered ecosystem that is integral to Songhees Nation's constitutionally protected rights and cultural practices.

Saanich's Urban Forest Strategy identifies Exceptional Trees requiring prioritized protection and retention as trees that:

- Hold cultural significance and are historically native to the land; and
- Support biodiversity and provide significant ecosystem services that are difficult or impossible to replace.

Songhees Nation emphasizes that these principles must extend beyond individual trees to include the interconnections of q^wł^aʔ^əlʔ^ənək (Garry Oak ecosystems) within which they support various

Songhees Nation



species. The ecosystem provides space and connections for plants, trees, pollinators, birds, animals, and insects.

As the QMP will guide land use and growth over the next 20 years, its decisions will have lasting impacts on Songhees Nation's traditional lands, food systems, cultural practices and medicines. These impacts require meaningful consultation with Songhees Nation prior to the finalization or adoption of planning frameworks and policy directions.

Songhees Nation respectfully requests that Council:

1. Postpone adoption of the Quadra McKenzie Plan pending meaningful consultation with Songhees Nation regarding Garry Oak ecosystem analysis, cumulative impacts, and long-term stewardship planning;
2. Include clear Garry Oak and q^wl^a?^al food system stewardship goals within the QMP, supported by measurable targets and accountability mechanisms recognizing these ecosystems as integral to Songhees Nation's Indigenous rights and cultural continuity; and
3. Develop and implement a responsive management framework outlining mitigation, restoration, and stewardship measures where ecosystem thresholds or stewardship goals are not met due to development pressures.

Songhees Nation looks forward to working collaboratively with Council and staff to ensure future planning decisions respect rights, responsibilities, and the long-term protection of these culturally significant ecosystems for future generations.

Sincerely,

Andrew Easson

Land Referral Guardian