

Cross-Border Forum – Executive Summary

Prepared by the EDC of San Juan County, based on session notes recorded by MP May's office and participant feedback

Overview

This briefing synthesizes participant reflections from the Cross-Border Forum feedback forms and discussions. It highlights the most salient cross-cutting themes, supported by representative quotations and participant-indicated next steps.

The 2025 Forum reaffirmed that “Our relationships are the resilience.” Across every discussion — from economic to environmental to community well-being — participants emphasized that strong relationships are the foundation of cross-border cooperation, shared stewardship, and collective action.

Top Takeaways (in order of prevalence)

Collaboration & Partnerships — noted throughout the Forum as the single most consistent priority. Participants emphasized the need to formalize connections through a coordinating structure or 'secretariat,' ensuring that cross-border work continues beyond events. Common keywords: collaborate, connect, partnership, network, trust.

First Nations Partnerships — emphasized across all sessions as vital to both environmental and economic resilience. Participants called for co-designed processes and recognition of First Nations leadership in stewardship and governance. Common keywords: First Nations, Indigenous, Lummi, Tsawout, relationship, knowledge.

Economic Resilience — discussions highlighted both stressors and strengths. Tariffs, supply chain fragility, housing and energy costs, and cross-border uncertainty are undermining local economies. Yet, participants noted that these pressures are also strengthening cooperation and dialogue. Common keywords: business, economy, housing, trade, workforce.

Environmental Stewardship — shoreline and marine discussions underscored the need for harmonized regulations, shared emergency response (oil-spill and derelict vessel removal), and expanded collaboration across agencies and borders. Participants emphasized blending First Nations and scientific knowledge systems for practical, local-scale solutions. Common keywords: environment, shoreline, sustainability, safety, stewardship.

Governance & Policy — recurring emphasis on establishing a formal cross-border mechanism for coordination and accountability. Participants supported developing a

working group or secretariat, shared communications platform, and asset map to connect initiatives. Common keywords: coordination, governance, fund, legislative, policy.

Community Engagement & Communications — the plenary discussions produced a clear action item: a communications and media strategy to share success stories and amplify local voices. Proposals included a co-authored media release, social media storytelling, and a central website hub for updates and resources. Common keywords: community, communication, outreach, awareness.

Representative Quotes

“Working together across borders reminded me how interconnected our communities truly are — we can’t build resilience in isolation.”

“The relationship is the resilience.”

“We must continue to make connections and create initiatives at the local level, ignoring voices that call for division.”

“The pressures are strengthening cross-border relationships, which have existed for thousands of years and will remain standing strong.”

Suggested Next Steps (participant-indicated, synthesized)

- Formalize governance and coordination through a cross-border secretariat or working group to manage ongoing efforts.
- Convene follow-up meetings in early 2026 to review progress, align funding, and sustain partnerships.
- Advance transportation connectivity, particularly the restoration of ferry routes vital to both sides of the border.
- Align environmental stewardship and economic resilience, integrating First Nations leadership and harmonized policy frameworks, and ensuring that existing policies and joint initiatives remain viable.
- Launch a joint communications strategy — shared stories, media outreach, and a central information hub to sustain public engagement.

All feedback and session notes were reviewed manually and analyzed using qualitative coding and frequency mapping to identify cross-cutting themes. Direct participant quotations are included verbatim to preserve authenticity.