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PODCAST SUMMARIES

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City Space Podcast: How an Indigenous-led Development is Forcing Vancouver to Face Tough Questions on Reconciliation

Run time: 28 minutes

Host: Irene Galea

Guest: Tim Coldwell, Ginger Gosnell-Meyers, Gordon Price, Sarah Kirby-Young

Podcast link

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-city-space-podcast/>

Podcast Summary

Across Canada, more and more First Nations are turning to real estate and housing development as money makers, shaping the future of Canadian cities. This is especially visible in Vancouver with projects like Señákw, a development by the Squamish Nation, set to become one of Canada's densest neighbourhoods. It is a project that carries a lot of promise but also comes with its share of controversy. This episode looks at

how developments like Señákw are forcing municipalities across the country to face some tough questions, including how to square Indigenous sovereignty with city planning and what reconciliation looks like at the local level.

Why Planners Should Listen

What does reconciliation look like at the local level and who gets to decide? These are some of the tough questions that host Irene Galea is looking to answer. This episode dives into the complexities of reconciliation through the lens of the Señákw development, a landmark urban reserve project led by the Squamish Nation.

In 2003, the Squamish Nation regained 10.5 acres of land, now the site of the Señákw development. Señákw is a housing initiative comprised of 11 towers, 6,000 rental units, including 1,200 affordable homes, with 250 reserved for Squamish members.

The podcast highlights tensions between Indigenous self-determination and local urban concerns like those from the Kits Point Residents Association. The Kits Point Residents Association didn't oppose the development outright, but raised concerns about its scale, density, and lack of consultation. Their lawsuit challenging the city's service agreement with the Squamish Nation was ultimately dismissed.

Key voices in the episode offer powerful reflections:

- Gosnell-Meyers emphasizes the need for non-Indigenous residents to understand their role in supporting reconciliation: "It's not the residents' fault that we live in a society where consultation of Indigenous people has largely been absent. But it is our responsibility to understand why we need to support First Nations reconciliation and economic self-determination where possible."
- Coldwell underscores the importance of Indigenous autonomy: "The ability for the nation to decide and have autonomy and authority over how they use their lands... is a big part of reconciliation."
- Gosnell-Meyers also challenges fears around Indigenous empowerment: "There is this unfounded fear that the more we learn about Indigenous history... the more we will have to give up. And that's not the reality that reconciliation provides... we'll be building a better society that doesn't alienate and marginalize populations."

The episode makes clear that urban reserves like Señákw operate outside municipal control, raising questions about governance, planning, and shared responsibility. It also invites listeners to reframe reconciliation not as a loss, but as a collective gain for communities, ecosystems, and future generations. This is a great listen!

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