

Staff Report

Corporate Services Department



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REPORT TO: Finance & Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: September 13th, 2021

SUBMITTED BY: Suzanne Charles Watson, Director of Equity, Anti-Racism & Indigenous Initiatives, 519-741-2200 ext. 7538

PREPARED BY: Suzanne Charles Watson, Director of Equity, Anti-Racism & Indigenous Initiatives, 519-741-2200 ext. 7538

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Wards

DATE OF REPORT: August 27th, 2021

REPORT NO.: COR-2021-23

SUBJECT: Indigenous Initiatives: Observance of National Day for Truth & Reconciliation

RECOMMENDATION:

That the activities of the Waterloo Region Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, and plans to observe the newly established Federal Statutory Holiday - National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR) on September 30, 2021, be received for information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to update Council on the activities of the Waterloo Region Reconciliation Action Plan Working group, and the planned activities to commemorate the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation on September 30, 2021.
- The activities of the Working Group are aligned with the broad objective of the City's Equity, Inclusion & Anti-Racism Policy to develop programs and services guided by the principles of equity, inclusion and anti-racism.
- The financial implications are \$5,000 allocation to a regional fund to support the Indigenous community for the observance of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.
- Engagement to support this report includes coordination and collaboration with the Waterloo region Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group
- This report supports A Caring Community by completing a comprehensive Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

BACKGROUND:

In 2019, the City demonstrated its commitment to advance its work on social justice issues, through a lens of equity, anti-racism and Indigenous partnership, when Council directed staff to, inter alia, implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

The Region and area municipalities (the cities of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo and the townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich) began to work together to coordinate efforts to support Indigenous-centered initiatives in August 2020, in response to the needs identified through the O:se Kenhionhata:tie Land Back Camp efforts and growing awareness of systemic issues experienced by Indigenous communities in accessing municipal spaces and services. In August 2020, both City of Kitchener and City of Waterloo Councils approved the waiving of municipal fees for Indigenous peoples to access City facilities and spaces and also endorsed the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan in collaboration amongst area municipalities in the Region. The new Federal Statutory Holiday - National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR), to be observed on September 30, 2021 is in response to the 80th call to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. The day coincides with the September 30 commemoration of Orange Shirt Day, which acknowledges the damage of residential schools, honours its victims and celebrates the survivors.

Using a collaborative approach across the region, through the Waterloo Region Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RAPWG), the observance of the NDTR will be approached as an opportunity to reflect, heal and come together in a spirit of truth and reconciliation, which acknowledges the historic (and contemporary) injustices endured by Indigenous peoples; and charts a more just future.

REPORT:

A region-wide Reconciliation Action Plan is being developed by the Region and all area municipalities in order to address key themes of concerns expressed by local Indigenous communities, see meaningful relationships enhanced between settlers and Indigenous people, and to uphold our commitments made to respond to the calls to action of the TRC.

A Reconciliation Action Plan approach is being recommended to support the many voices of the local Indigenous communities to address the systemic issues and barriers for Indigenous peoples that are inherent in municipal processes, services, programs and spaces in Waterloo Region. Embarking on the development of a region-wide Reconciliation Action Plan alongside local Indigenous communities is an important next step in the Region's journey toward truth and reconciliation. Additionally, as we begin this journey of reconciliation, we acknowledge that we are learning along the way. We recognize the importance of being open, transparent, and accountable for the Reconciliation Action Plan and all subsequent actions.

A Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RAPWG) consisting of staff representatives from the Region of Waterloo, and all area municipalities, has been established to advance this important work and create a consistent regional approach to reconciliation through collaboration, information sharing and relationship building.

To further advance this work, areas of initial focus include but are not limited to:

- Learning and Development
- Honorarium and Compensation Practices
- Indigenous Placekeeping and Land Opportunities
- Communications and Events; and
- Heritage, Cultural Landscapes, Plaques and Commemoration

The Region-wide Reconciliation Action Plan will not be a detailed report or final strategy, but rather a living list of actions, priorities, commitments, and an accountability framework that will be informed through regular and ongoing discussion and relationships with local Indigenous communities.

A preliminary 2022 budget of approximately \$200,000 is required to support engagement, communications, research, and co-op staffing resources. A cost share approach amongst area municipalities is being utilized as it increases efficiency and capacity to deliver and provides a streamline regional approach to the work. The City of Kitchener's contribution to the 2022 budget is \$42,160, which will be identified for Council's consideration through the 2022 budget process.

In addition to the development of a more comprehensive Reconciliation Action Plan, opportunities to advance Indigenous-centered initiatives are being explored by the RAPWG as they are identified. The following opportunities and initiatives being supported by the City of Kitchener include:

- Indigenous placemaking at Huron Natural Area
- Building a permanent, outdoor gathering space at Victoria Park in partnership with Indigenous communities. This site will be a safe and culturally appropriate space for members of Indigenous communities to honour their history and celebrate their heritage and culture.
- Suspension of rental-related fees associated with use of City spaces for Indigenous cultural and ceremonial events until a policy supporting the access and use of public spaces by Indigenous peoples to carry out cultural and ceremonial practices is developed.

Municipal specific initiatives are the responsibility of individual municipalities to fund outside of the RAPWG budget. Funding associated with these initiatives will be brought forward through the annual budget process for Council approval.

National Day of Truth and Reconciliation

As part of the coordinated effort of the RAPWG, the City's observance of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (NDTR) is intended to:

1. support Indigenous-led groups or organizations in recognizing the NDTR; through - but not limited to - funding for programming
2. recognize and commemorate the NDTR for City staff and volunteers through opportunities for meaningful personal reflection, education and service that are inclusive and accessible
3. promote initiatives to observe the NDTR using internal and external communication

More specifically, activities to support the NDTR will fall into one of three categories:

CATEGORY	ACTIVITIES
Community Support and Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide funding (up to \$5,000 total) to support Indigenous-led initiatives, celebrating Indigenous culture and ceremony generally; and recognizing NDTR specifically• Free access to public spaces for Indigenous communities to celebrate their culture and ceremony• Hoisting and lowering the "Every Child Matters" flag on September 30, 2021 and October 04, 2021, respectively, to commemorate NDTR and bring attention to the National Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
Consciousness Raising/ Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation and distribution of curated list of learning resources including books, podcasts, websites, webinars, films, documentaries and music.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The development of a robust internal and external communications plan, commemorating the day. External facing content will be coordinated with municipal partners, as directed by the RAP working group.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports A Caring Community through alignment with the comprehensive Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – Funding (of up to \$5,000) from the EDI Capital account to support Indigenous-led initiatives, celebrating Indigenous culture and ceremony generally; and recognizing NDTR specifically

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting. In addition, communication has been shared with the Wellbeing Waterloo Region First Nations, Metis, Inuit Advisory and Advocacy Circle regarding the availability of municipal spaces and funding for the day’s activities.

CONSULT - Initial outreach with members of the Indigenous communities has helped to inform the approach to a Reconciliation Action Plan. We hope to continue to build relationships and collaborate with Indigenous organizations and communities.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

COR-19-021– Municipal Response to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

INS-20-008 – Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan – The Journey Forward

APPROVED BY: Victoria Raab, General Manager, Corporate Services Department