


Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	June 6, 2019
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton Urban Indigenous Strategy (HSC19030) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY:	Grace Mater Director, Children's Services and Neighbourhood Development Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

On March 30, 2015, Council approved the following:

That the City of Hamilton initiate an Indigenous Justice Strategy, consisting of:

- (i) A commitment by the Mayor, the City Manager, available senior staff, and any available Councillors to meet on an occasional basis with Hamilton area Indigenous leaders, at least twice per year, to discuss topics of concern to Indigenous people, with appropriate follow-up by City staff based on what is heard;
- (ii) Arrangements for training that creates awareness of the unique issues and circumstance faced by Indigenous persons be provided to City public servants who occasionally interact with Indigenous citizens;
- (iii) An official, symbolic commemoration by Council of the coming of the Witness Blanket to Hamilton;
- (iv) A letter sent by the Mayor of Hamilton to the Office of the Prime Minister, expressing Hamilton Council's desire that the Prime Minister take significant

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action on the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous girls and women, so as to create greater justice and protection for Indigenous girls and women in Hamilton and across Canada; and,

- (v) That up to \$5,000 be provided to bring the Witness Blanket to Hamilton Central Library to be funded from the Tax Stabilization Reserve.

INFORMATION

In December 2016, the City of Hamilton began work on developing the Urban Indigenous Strategy to identify actions and strengthen the City's relationship with the Indigenous community. The strategy is also intended to demonstrate respect for Indigenous knowledge and cultures and promote a better understanding among all residents about Indigenous histories, cultures, experiences and contributions.

The key objectives of the Hamilton Urban Indigenous Strategy (attached as Appendix "A" to Report HSC19030) include:

- Identify actions within municipal jurisdiction and capacity arising from the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's Final Report.
- Celebrate and honour Indigenous people, cultures and traditions.
- Promote a greater understanding among all Hamiltonians through public education on the histories and contributions of Indigenous peoples.
- Create opportunities for education and internal collaboration among city staff to strengthen the relationship with the Indigenous community and service providers.

The strategy was developed in three phases:

1. **"Plant the strategy"**: focused on establishing the governance structure, guiding principles, and raising awareness of this new work with both the Indigenous community and all Hamilton residents
2. **"Cultivate the strategy"**: focused on engaging Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents in a variety of ways about the needs and priorities for the strategy
3. **"Harvest the strategy"**: involved finalizing and sharing the findings and recommendations

The development of the strategy was guided by two collaborative Circles.

1. The **Coordinating Circle** was created to lead the strategy with membership comprised of Indigenous community partners and City staff. It has acted as a planning table and has carried out its work based on principles that honour the Seven Grandfather Teachers of the Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee teachings of Ga nigohi:yo.

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2. An internal **Staff Circle on Indigenous Relations** was also established and is comprised of management from all City departments. Its purpose is to champion relationship building, share information and best practices, and identify opportunities for improved engagement with Indigenous peoples.

Community Engagement

Over 500 Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents were consulted and engaged in the development of the strategy through a variety of mechanisms including:

- Community outreach through participation and partnership on a variety of community events
- The Urban Indigenous Strategy Survey
- Community conversation events
- Youth workshops and participation in youth conferences
- Information fairs
- Research conducted in partnership with McMaster University

The community consultations not only informed the strategic themes and actions, but also provided a snapshot of the negative experiences and frequency of discrimination that many Indigenous community members have had when accessing City services or in the broader community. Community engagement has shown that community members are seeking concrete actions that the City can take to contribute to eliminating discrimination and increasing respect for Indigenous peoples.

Strategic Themes and Actions

The Urban Indigenous Strategy uses the strategic themes of Land, People and Spirit to understand how the identified actions connect to an Indigenous understanding of the relationships people have to land, to each other, and to spirituality.

Strategic Theme	Key Directions
Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City should adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ('UNDRIP') as the framework to move forward with reconciliation • Indigenous peoples must be involved in decision-making in municipal activities that affect them. • Consultation with urban Indigenous peoples and with local First Nations communities must be meaningful. • Urban Indigenous peoples need a space outdoors for gathering, practicing sacred ceremonies and sharing teachings. • Care for the environment, including the land and water, are important. Respecting Indigenous ecological knowledge will benefit environmental restoration and preservation in Hamilton. • Acknowledgement of traditional Indigenous territory in Hamilton should be practised across the city. The city needs to demonstrate this acknowledgement beyond words.
Spirit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The City of Hamilton can do more to visually represent the historic and continuing presence of Indigenous peoples. • Indigenous art in public spaces is needed to honour historic and contemporary contributions. • Increase support for Indigenous artists and art programming. • Indigenous cultures and traditions need to be respected and seen as more than a performance. • Indigenous stories and languages need to be seen as part of Hamilton's heritage. • More can be done to celebrate National Indigenous History Month in Hamilton.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use public education to increase understanding and break down stereotypes and racism. • The City of Hamilton should become a leader for other corporations and institutions in increasing employment opportunities for Indigenous people. • City employees should be mandated to have a cultural understanding. • Be creative about how to deliver mainstream services to Indigenous peoples in culturally appropriate ways.

Each strategic theme also includes specific actions. In total, there are 40 strategic actions grouped into the three themes. Examples of these actions include:

- Work with the Indigenous community to establish and maintain a piece of land that the community can use for ceremonial, spiritual and other activities.
- Establish an Indigenous Cultural Centre that offers interpretive programming, provides a gathering space for Indigenous peoples to practice their ceremonies and hold cultural events.
- Raise local Indigenous flags permanently at City Hall.
- Expand the promotion and celebration of Indigenous History Month at City Hall and across Hamilton.
- Bring together partners to offer public education to all residents about the history of Indigenous peoples and current topics that will contribute to reconciliation. This public education program should include highlighting local Indigenous resources and museums and promote awareness of national holidays such as National Indigenous Peoples Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.
- Provide education to all city staff about Indigenous peoples, Indigenous-settler history, treaties, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This education should also cover the urban Indigenous community in Hamilton and the history of traditional territory in the Hamilton area.
- Increase the number of Indigenous employees at the City and support networking and mentorship opportunities for Indigenous staff.

Key Accomplishments

Over the past three years, significant progress has been made to begin to strengthen the relationship between the City and Indigenous residents. Examples of key accomplishments include:

- Development of a revised traditional land acknowledgement statement that acknowledges the traditional Indigenous territory in Hamilton that has been cared for by many nations. The new statement attached as Appendix “B” to Report HSC19030 will replace the former statement effective July 1, 2019. It has been developed in consultation with both Six Nations Elected Council and Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.
- Development of a Use of Indigenous Medicines Policy and Procedure, one of the first such policies for a Canadian municipality. This policy confirms the City’s commitment to supporting Indigenous peoples to use sacred medicines in ceremonies such as smudging or prayer pipe ceremonies in municipal facilities.
- Hosting a KAIROS Blanket Exercise for over 100 participants which built awareness and engaged residents in a conversation on reconciliation.
- Launch of an Indigenous Cultural Competency Training pilot for 50 city staff, which will inform the roll-out of corporate-wide training for all staff.

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- “Bringing the City to the Community” Information Fair which brought over 20 different City of Hamilton programs and initiatives to Indigenous community members.
- Launch of two lunch and learn documentary series viewings for City staff to build awareness and engage in conversations about reconciliation.
- Celebration of National Indigenous History Month, which included panel displays and Indigenous artefacts being on display at City Hall for the month of June (2018 and 2019).
- Raising Indigenous flags at City Hall to commemorate National Indigenous History Month, with the intent of moving towards a permanent installation of the flags.

Next Steps

The Urban Indigenous Strategy charts out the path to reconciliation and will require the ongoing commitment and engagement of City staff across the corporation. Staff will work across City departments to share the recommendations and develop an implementation plan which will be shared with the community and Council by the end of 2019. The implementation plan will identify timelines, roles, specific actions, and any budgetary impacts to address the recommendations of the Urban Indigenous Strategy. The Coordinating Circle and Staff Circle on Indigenous Relations will continue to guide and inform the implementation plan as we move forward.

The City is also committed to continuing to consult with the Indigenous community through a variety of mechanisms such as community presentations and talking circles. The City will be accountable to the community by measuring our progress along the way and providing annual updates.

The City of Hamilton is committed to strengthening its relationship with the Indigenous community. Work has already begun on some of the recommendations in the Urban Indigenous Strategy; however, there is recognition that we are still early in a long journey towards reconciliation.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report HSC19030: Hamilton Urban Indigenous Strategy

Appendix “B” to Report HSC19030: Traditional Land Acknowledgement for the City of Hamilton