

Declaration of Mutual Commitment and Friendship (FINAL)

Improving the Quality of Life of Indigenous People Across Ontario's Municipalities Joint and Ongoing Commitment Between Signatories: the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC)

1. WHEREAS in Ontario, over 85 percent of Indigenous people live in municipalities;
2. WHEREAS the growing percentage of Indigenous people living in municipalities and the Friendship Centres that serve them participate in and contribute to municipal community life;
3. WHEREAS the Friendship Centres have existed in Ontario municipalities for over half a century and have vital roles to play in community development, social cohesion, and improving the quality of life for Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas;
4. WHEREAS the Friendship Centres receive their mandate from their communities and are inclusive of all Indigenous people;
5. WHEREAS municipal governments have a growing and critical role in human and social services and community development and many have shown leadership in working in partnership with Indigenous organizations;
6. WHEREAS the Truth and Reconciliation Commission defines reconciliation as “an ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships”;
7. WHEREAS strengthening relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is essential to municipal governments, Friendship Centres, and communities across Ontario;
8. WHEREAS municipal governments play an important role in providing and delivering valuable programs and services to meet the needs of their residents, as well as being responsible, in all or some part, for over two hundred and eighty (280) pieces of provincial legislation that impact daily life of all who live in Ontario;
9. WHEREAS many municipal governments and Friendship Centres have taken up the responsibility to collaborate on a variety of initiatives that improve Indigenous quality of life and have had tangible community impacts;
10. WHEREAS municipal governments are on the front-lines working directly with all individuals to support and determine social determinants of health, demonstrating a notion of direct responsibility contributing to community wellbeing and prosperity;
11. WHEREAS the AMO has developed the Indigenous Relations Task Force to advise the AMO Board of Directors on municipal-Indigenous relationship building;
12. WHEREAS the OFIFC was founded in 1971 and works to support, advocate for and build the capacity of member Friendship Centres across Ontario;
13. WHEREAS the Friendship Centre Movement is the largest Indigenous service network in the province supporting the vibrant and quickly-growing Indigenous population through programming, research, education, and policy advocacy;

14. WHEREAS AMO and OFIFC are partnering on a variety of initiatives to improve collaboration and information sharing amongst our membership, not limited to the work of the AMO-OFIFC Indigenous Relations Working Group and the AMO-OFIFC Memorandum of Understanding (*signed on date*); AND
15. WHEREAS this declaration is a living document that municipal governments and Friendship Centres can sign onto or use as a framework for the development of local or regional declarations that can be added to this declaration;

THAT SIGNATORY MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS RECOGNIZE:

16. THAT Indigenous people reside and build community and resilience in municipalities across Ontario;
17. THE value of Indigenous knowledge and expertise to design, plan, implement, and evaluate public policy and programs that impact the wellbeing of Indigenous people is paramount;
18. THE responsibility taken up by Indigenous Friendship Centres to meet Indigenous community need;
19. THE value of building relationships and partnerships with Friendship Centres to improve the quality of life of Indigenous people in their municipality; AND
20. THAT the exchange of information and skills within and between municipal governments and related associations contribute to improved understanding in the area of Indigenous relations.

THAT SIGNATORY ONTARIO INDIGENOUS FRIENDSHIP CENTRES RECOGNIZE:

21. THAT they are and have been leaders in urban Indigenous community development and in reflecting and responding to the needs of Indigenous people in municipalities for over half a century;
22. THAT they are engaged in local and regional affairs and that they contribute to municipal life and that they lead the Indigenous social, community, economic, and cultural development of municipalities across Ontario;
23. THE responsibility taken up by municipal governments to meet and serve Indigenous communities;
24. THAT municipal governments provide essential services that Friendship Centre community members rely on to thrive;
25. THAT municipal governments are leaders in Ontario in meeting community needs through local programs, services and community development, be they in human and social services, public safety or public works/infrastructure, and are integral to community well-being and the social determinants of health;
26. THAT the development and maintenance of good relationships and partnerships with municipal governments is essential to achieving long-term positive impact on Indigenous communities; AND
27. THAT Friendship Centres acknowledge that they operate in a municipal landscape and rely on municipal governments.

ALL SIGNATORIES RECOGNIZE:

28. THAT we are uniquely positioned to improve community-wellbeing through local policy development, programs and services as we are well-equipped to be responsive to community needs;
29. THAT community-identified needs and priorities should provide the basis for policy and program development, and that we are uniquely positioned to improve the quality of life of Indigenous people living in municipalities;
30. THAT mutual respect, responsibility, trust, transparency and collaboration to meet common community priorities are key principles of relationship building between non-Indigenous and Indigenous organizations;
31. THAT the Friendship Centres and municipal governments play key roles in working against racism, inequality, discrimination, and stigma within and between communities;
32. THAT the goal of this declaration is to provide municipal governments and Friendship Centres with a framework for relationship-building to advance reconciliation in communities across Ontario;
33. THAT the goal of this declaration is to enhance social cohesion between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and support closer cultural, social and civic ties between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people;
34. THAT we can play a leadership role and set a standard by advancing reconciliation locally and regionally through partnerships and collaboration;
35. THAT fostering local and regional partnerships is integral to improving the quality of life for all communities; AND
36. THAT we establish and maintain an ongoing dialogue and working relationships at the local and provincial orders.

SIGNATORIES AND ADJACENT DATES:

AMO

OFIFC

Ongoing Signatures:

Municipal Governments (Elected Officials)

Friendship Centres (Presidents)