

## Urban Indigenous Strategy and Indigenous Relations Team Updates as of April 2024

An overview of some of the key initiatives of the Urban Indigenous Strategy and associated portfolio delivered by the Indigenous Relations Team (IRT) from February 2023 to April 2024 follows below.

### Days of Recognition (Spirit #20, People #23, 29 and 32)<sup>1</sup>

The following days of significance to the Indigenous community and People were recognized:

- National Indigenous Languages Day (March 31)
- National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls/Red Dress Day (May 5)
- National Indigenous History Month (June) and National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21)
- Orange Shirt Day/National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (September 30)
- Local Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (October 4)
- Treaty Week (First Week of November)
- International Inuit Day (November 7)
- Louis Riel Day (November 16)

Education is an important way to increase understanding and break down stereotypes and racism. By promoting awareness of significant dates, the City can honour, celebrate, and help others gain an appreciation for a) what they are b) why they’re important, and c) why they need to be recognized. For each day of recognition, the City website was updated with relevant content, educational resources, links to further information (highlighting what is available at the Hamilton Public Library (HPL)). Multiple communication channels (including social media posts, newspaper ads, and emails) were utilized to acknowledge each date and encourage people to further educate themselves on these topics. including, to acknowledge each day of significance and to encourage others to educate themselves on these topics. A number of virtual education sessions (‘Lunch and Learns’) were hosted for staff on subjects such as Stereotypes and Racism, and Six Nations Land Claims (Woodland Cultural Centre), Honour to Senator Murray Sinclair (National Film Board).

The team delivered some key events for the days of recognition in 2023.

Partnering with the HPL, an Exhibit of red dresses entitled “We’re Going Missing” was installed at the Central Branch in May to recognize National Day for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).

For National Indigenous Peoples Day/Month, a celebration was held at City Hall on June 21<sup>st</sup> in early afternoon with programming to celebrate and acknowledge the day. The event was filled with speakers, performances by singers, drummers, and was a great way to mark the day with the Indigenous community in Hamilton. Later that afternoon, a Gathering was hosted at the Central Library entitled “Strengthening Our Bundle”. The evening included the IRT sharing an UIS update, drumming and dancing with the community, and even an information fair with many Staff from other divisions participating. The event was very well

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<sup>1</sup> Correspond to the Actions within each Theme of the [Urban Indigenous Strategy](#)

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attended, and Staff received positive feedback on it. On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, the IRT hosted a film screening in partnership with the Woodland Cultural Centre entitled “Silent No More”, a Virtual Tour of the Former Mohawk Institute Indian Residential School in the Woodshed at the Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology.

In September, the IR team supported Public Health Services and Indigenous community partners in holding an Indigenous Music Social (Mino Biimadziwin Wakya’ta’shatse Social) at Gage Park. The day was filled with Indigenous music artists, local Indigenous vendors, and tents/information booths from various local Indigenous community partners to let the community know what services and people can help them in the city. In collaboration with Tourism and Culture for September 30, a Public Art ceremony unveiling Hamilton’s newest piece entitled “All Our Relations” took place at Hamilton West Harbour. National Day for Truth and Reconciliation was recognized through the inclusion of Indigenous ceremony, drumming, performances and remarks by knowledge keepers. Additional activities including providing opportunities for City staff to purchase orange shirts to wear and participate in virtual staff learning webinars during the month. Similar to last year, proceeds from shirt sales were donated to the Woodland Cultural Centre Education program. With the support of Senior Leadership, all staff received a slide deck with information and people leaders were encouraged to engage staff in conversations about the significance of Orange Shirt Day.

### Indigenous Landmarks and Monuments Review (Spirit #11 and 12, People #36)

In May 2022, Council approved Phase 1 [Report HSC21025a/PED21149a/PW21038a](#) and the Honouring our Roots: Creating Space for Indigenous Voices recommendations from the Circle of Experts. Five priority sites were identified by the Indigenous community:

- Sir John A. MacDonald monument (Gore Park, King St. at Hughson St.)
- Queen Victoria monument (Gore Park, west end facing James St.)
- Augustus Jones monument (King St. E. at Jones St. in Stoney Creek)
- United Empire Loyalist monuments (front of 50 Main St. E. and Dundurn Park)
- former Ryerson Recreation Centre (251 Duke St.).

In May 2023, [Council approved the renaming of the facility at 251 Duke](#) to Kanétskare (meaning “the bay” of “the inlet” in Mohawk) Recreation Centre. The IRT and Recreation Division worked together to implement the name change including installing new signs, updating associated references online and in print, and developing materials that were shared via multiple communication channels to raise awareness and educate the public about the new name.

The Indigenous Curator and Indigenous Community Outreach Coordinator hired to co-lead this project spent time getting oriented in the first quarter of 2023 and then focussed on implementation with support from the Landmarks and Monuments Working Group.

To begin work on the high priority sites, Staff set out to gather information from the Circle of Experts and others about Indigenous history and considered different ways that this material could be conveyed. To better support consistency in what was being shared, a local Indigenous media production company was retained and worked with Staff to

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assemble some of those interviews into a video. The outcome of the more than six months of cinematography and audio design was a 22-minute video which will form the basis of a public education campaign. The objective of the campaign is to highlight the lack of Indigenous history/ misrepresentation of the full history at 3 of the sites to help with understanding the importance of why this work is needed.

A short survey was then created to complement the video and gather feedback on how we can move this work forward.

### Cultural Capacity Training (People #29)

Staff education is a key component to further understanding and appreciation of Indigenous culture, history and traditions, as was outlined in the Urban Indigenous Strategy Final Report (HSC19030). Several learning opportunities are made available to staff throughout the year including webinars, documentary screenings, lunch and learn sessions on diverse topics such as reconciliation and treaties.

In April, the newly elected Council and Senior Leadership Team participated in a full day Cultural Awareness training facilitated by First Peoples Group (FPG, an external Indigenous consulting firm). The course was designed to provide a foundation for understanding traditional Indigenous teachings, and key aspects of the past/ present/ future of First Nations, Métis and Inuit. There was a positive response to the learning and support to share this valuable experience within the Administration.

Building on the success of training with elected officials, the IRT worked with FPG to develop an Indigenous Cultural Awareness course tailored to leadership across the organization. In September, nearly 550 Staff (primarily those who manage direct reports) took part in an offsite training day. Participants learned about Indigenous Peoples and their history with the objective to build understanding, knowledge, attitudes and values essential to fostering positive and productive relationships with Indigenous people and communities. A recording of the session was made and assigned as required training to those people leaders who were not able to attend the in-person date. The IRT were very encouraged by the extremely positive feedback received on the content shared.

### Indigenous Advisory Committee (Land #2 and 3)

Committee chose to only meet in the first quarter of 2023 as they anticipated recruitment for a new term would get underway after the budget process and decided since there were no time critical items to be addressed, the IAC could stop meeting until that occurred. Subsequently, Council directed Staff to review the Volunteer Advisory Committees (VACs) to provide recommendations on public engagement methods inclusive of the VACs to fulfill the priorities of the 2022-2026 Term of Council. Through the year, members of the IAC have attended events as a way to continue supporting the IRT and work in the community while the committee is still paused.

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### Community Involvement, Partnerships and Community Events (Land #4, Spirit #21, People #26 and 32)

The IRT partnered with Indigenous community agencies on events, gatherings, and community engagement throughout the year, as highlighted below:

- Supported the Branches of Native Development (BOND) to host their annual Soaring Spirit Festival and Pow Wow on June 21 - 23 to honour the Summer Solstice and to celebrate the Indigenous community in Hamilton; activities included drumming, dancing, various cultural teachings, Indigenous food and craft vendors
- Attended the “Lifting Up Our Children Event” presented by the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre at Gage Park on June 29
- On October 4, attended the gathering and walk hosted at City Hall by Sisters in Spirit to acknowledge the Local Day of Action for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two Spirit People

### First Nations Engagement in Archaeology (Land #5, Spirit #19)

A cross-departmental workgroup (Public Works (PW), Planning and Economic Development (PED), Corporate Services – Legal and Procurement Sections (CS)) continued to develop a corporate-wide strategy/consistent approach to how the City engages with First Nations and other Indigenous groups regarding archaeology and with consideration to possibly expand to environmental assessment work. Staff offer to meet with the Nations at least annually to continue to discuss/review capital projects and build those relationships.

Where project-specific issues arise, the First Nations’ and City staff seek to engage in dialogue towards finding mutually beneficial solutions. One example of this is on the East-West Road Corridor in Waterdown; data indicated that archaeological sites could extend beyond project limits and given this possibility and the importance of protecting Indigenous heritage, fieldwork was suspended pending development of an acceptable strategy in partnership with the participating First Nations.

### Discovery Centre Study (Land #3, Spirit #11 and 14)

The HPL identified an opportunity for the IRT to partner with them in the Discovery Centre Study to examine a Proposed Concept which incorporates an Indigenous gathering space, public library, exhibition space, visitor amenities and a café at the site in West Harbour. Staff from both teams engaged with the urban Indigenous community and public at various events through the Spring and Summer of 2023 on the preliminary idea and reported the findings to Council in November (by [Report PED21090\(e\)/HSC23073](#)), where Council endorsed support for the Study to be undertaken.

### Policy Review (People #24 and 34)

The IRT worked with the Recreation Division to bring forward a report on the [Use of Indigenous Images/Themes in City Sports and Recreation Facilities \(HSC24004\)](#) which was

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approved by Council January 24, 2024. The objectives of the Policy include i) ensuring that the City’s sport and recreational facilities are void of Indigenous themed logos and images related to non-Indigenous sport organizations and clubs; ii) removing barriers to participation in our recreational and sport facilities by Indigenous peoples; and c) providing a consistent approach for staff to address issues that arise from noncompliance of the Policy. Subsequently, further direction given to Staff by motion was to report back with a similar policy for all indoor and outdoor facilities under municipal jurisdiction.