

Urban Indigenous Strategy and Indigenous Relations Updates as of December 2024

Through the Urban Indigenous Strategy Implementation Plan Report HSC21001, Staff outlined the process and priorities to move forward on the Urban Indigenous Strategy (UIS) actions. Cross divisional Work Groups would be established over time to collaborate on Strategy initiatives, beginning with three of the Work Groups. An overview of the status of each of the early prioritized actions follows below.

UIS ACTIONS THAT ARE CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS

Land Themed Actions

Raise awareness and strengthen role of the Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC)

- the committee is pending reinstatement of the City’s volunteer advisory committees following a review
- following Council’s approval, Staff will work with the community on the recruitment and selection of members

Improve meaningful consultation with urban Indigenous residents and First Nation communities on municipal projects, plans, and approvals

- consultation is happening in different areas of the organization, including:
 - active monitoring and input to Archaeology projects
 - started to circulate Planning applications and involve the Nations on municipal Planning Policy and processes (e.g. Urban Boundary Expansion application framework)
 - actively inviting the urban Indigenous community (e.g. Circle of Beads) to be part of project working groups (e.g. Discovery Centre Study, Macassa Bay Renewal) and striving to create a larger network within the urban Indigenous community

Include and listen to Elders on key initiatives and partnerships between the City and Indigenous community

- Staff is making connections wherever possible
- inviting Elders to participate/share at community/municipal events and be part of Municipal projects (e.g. on steering committees, working groups)

Show respect for Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) by including Indigenous voices in environmental leadership and incorporating TEK in municipal practises

- Staff is starting to seek out TEK input from the Nations through specific projects e.g. Urban Forest Strategy, Biodiversity Action Plan, Climate Action Strategy
- a natural heritage policy is currently being developed

Work with Indigenous communities to provide education to staff and residents about acknowledging traditional territories in Hamilton

- educating staff and residents on land acknowledgment via a toolkit published on the website
- expanding on why we acknowledge during meetings and events, being intentional about what the words represent
- will be consulting the Treaty Nations on an update to the land acknowledgment

Spirit Themed Actions

Incorporate more Indigenous stories and voices into the City’s culture and heritage plans

- established the Curator of Indigenous Heritage and Culture role in Heritage Resource Management (HRM)
- gathering Indigenous perspectives to be added to site (museum) interpretations
- enhancing exhibit development to highlight Indigenous history
- Landmarks and Monuments project will provide additional opportunities, with a report back to Council in Q2-2025

Use markers and signs to restore Indigenous names and identify significant Indigenous landmarks in Hamilton (can include street names, trails, parks)

- established the Curator Indigenous Heritage and Culture as well as the Indigenous Community Outreach and Research Coordinator roles
- Indigenous history and perspectives are being added to site interpretations
- subsequent phases of the 'Honouring our Roots' initiative (Landmarks and Monuments project) will begin later in 2025-26, including examining the City’s Naming Policies and practices for opportunities
- exploring potential partnerships to provide education and public art

Continue to improve how City works with First Nations when conducting archaeology; including identifying how to educate the public on the rich archaeological history in Hamilton

- instituted an Archaeological Monitoring Policy, Staff from various service units regularly engage with First Nations on archaeological assessments

Expand the promotion and celebration of Indigenous History Month at City Hall and across Hamilton

- an annual Days of Recognition program has been created, highlighting several dates of significance for Indigenous communities, people, and culture
- the program incorporates education, communication, and events into acknowledging these Days
- Staff is beginning to offer more opportunities for Hamiltonians to educate themselves by providing more public education through more channels, more often

People Themed Actions

Bring together partners to offer public education to all residents about the history of Indigenous peoples and current topics that will contribute to reconciliation (highlight local Indigenous resources and museums, promote awareness of national holidays such as National Indigenous Peoples Day, National Day for Truth, and Reconciliation)

- work is being done in part through the hosting of Days of Recognition public events
- the Indigenous Relations webpage is refreshed frequently with information and resources
- Staff co-create and deliver/partner on more community programming (e.g. blanket exercise)

Enable City staff to deliver City services in a culturally appropriate way

- initiated an Indigenous-specific Fee Subsidy Childcare Worker in the Childrens and Community Services Division
- seek out opportunities to educate staff to be more culturally aware and apply it in their work
- researching and exploring a more coordinated way for municipal services to be delivered to Indigenous residents

Identify and eliminate municipal barriers preventing Indigenous people from carrying out ceremonial practises in public spaces

- policy development is in progress (e.g. Use of Indigenous Medicines, Sacred Fires)
- working with the community to identify barriers and needs
- proactively seek opportunities to intentionally create spaces e.g. Macassa Bay Renewal project

Provide education to all City staff about Indigenous people, Indigenous-settler history, treaties, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (will cover the urban Indigenous community in Hamilton and the history of traditional territory in the Hamilton area)

- a core/foundational 'Indigenous Awareness' course was delivered to the Corporate Extended Leadership Team (all people leaders) in 2023
- educational opportunities are made available throughout the year for staff to voluntarily participate (e.g. Lunch and Learns) to grow their knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and relevant topics
- a framework for a corporate Indigenous Cultural Competency Training Program is in development for consideration by Senior Leadership Team

Ensure Public Health programs respect Indigenous medicines and healing practices

- all Public Health Services staff are required to take the following training,
 - the San'yas Anti-Racism Indigenous Cultural Safety Training Program-Ontario Core Health

- three half day Hamilton-specific training (topics include Treaties, Six Nations, Mississaugas of the Credit, medicines and protocols, Hamilton Urban Indigenous community) delivered by the Indigenous Health Strategy Specialist
- approximately 2/3 of Public Health staff have completed (goal for all staff by the end of 2025)¹
- an Indigenous Well-being Advisory Circle is set up for City of Hamilton (will be a place to bring initiatives, policies, pathways to get direction)

UIS ACTIONS THAT ARE PENDING

Land Themed Actions

Develop guidance and policy tools for senior leaders and staff about UNDRIP

- research has been initiated and a gap analysis will be conducted to identify where the City’s policies can be improved to further align with the intentions of UNDRIP
- examples of what some municipalities are doing was collected through discussions referenced in Appendix “B” to Report HSC25010 that will assist
- this work will be included in the implementation working groups that will be getting underway in Spring

Understand how concepts such as 'Doctrine of Discovery' affect municipal decision making and develop tools to reform those processes

- provide education on the Doctrine and its impacts
- identify processes that need changing and work with Indigenous community and internal stakeholders to redesign
- this work will be included in the implementation working groups that will be getting underway in Spring

Increase outreach to Indigenous residents to access conservation areas

- initiated dialogue with Hamilton Conservation Authority
- will approach the other Conservation Authorities as well

Spirit Themed Actions

Bring together Indigenous artists with youth to create a mural or other forms of street art

- potential for collaboration between Niwasa youth hub and Hamilton Police on a legal graffiti wall/mural in the short term

Ensure Indigenous stories and local Indigenous history are included in official archives across Hamilton

- Staff will work with Clerks, Heritage Resource Management, and the Hamilton Public Library in this regard

¹ There will be annual enrollment for new staff in 2026 and onward

Continue to improve how the City works with First Nations when conducting archaeology; include identifying how to educate the public on the rich archaeological history in Hamilton

- work with the Nations to find ways to educate the public
- will invite the Treaty Nations to participate in review/updating of the Archaeology Management Plan in the medium term

Identify/create ways to support Indigenous artists

- established an informal list of Indigenous artists for small art call projects
- invite local Indigenous artists to participate in municipally hosted events

Commission public art in a prominent location that honours mutual respect and the spirit of reconciliation

Beyond the UIS, Staff are supporting all levels of leadership across departments, advising them in their reconciliation journey on initiatives including but not limited to, infrastructure development, planning files, policy creation and strategic plans.