

## Municipal scan of Truth and Reconciliation best practices as of December 2024

The Indigenous Relations team communicated and/or met with eight (8) municipalities<sup>1</sup> to discuss their experiences when it comes to reconciliation actions. The question posed was, what are five best successes that they have had with reconciliation work, and what are three limitations/challenges? A few notable success stories are:

- Creating a consistent approach to meeting the requirements of Duty to Consult by centralizing, educating, and streamlining the Indigenous Relations Office engagement and consultation practices (including establishing the amount of compensation to First Nations and communities) so that there is consistency between all departments who consult.
- Ensuring that the perspectives of Indigenous people are reflected in the stories, historical markers, and place names around the cities.
- Establishing a new alternative approach for Indigenous people in terms of health, prevention, and well-being. This includes alternatives to police enforcement, the creation of a community-based, client-informed, and trauma-informed response to non-emergency crisis calls and wellness checks.
- Creating a Task Force specifically focused on implementing the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- Hiring employees specifically tasked to work on Memorandums Of Understanding (MOUs) with surrounding First Nations as well as establishing municipal service agreements with emergency services on First Nations.

When having these discussions with other municipalities, there were a few common challenges that many of these cities face with Indigenous relations/Reconciliation work. A few of those shared challenges are:

- Decision-Making/Complex Structures. In some instances, organizational structure limits the amount/level of authority to effect corporate or policy changes.
- Gathering Spaces. Lack of a land-base or gathering space where the Urban Indigenous community and Indigenous people overall feel that they can use and feel culturally safe in.
- Funding. A lot of work being done by Indigenous Relations offices can be highly dynamic, and touch on the work of many other departments. There was a common theme at times of lacking in operating costs to complete projects, and/or having enough staff to complete all the work that needs to be done.

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<sup>1</sup> Staff reached out to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities twice, however, did not receive a response.

## EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSES FROM OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

### City of Toronto:

- Opened [The Spirit Garden](#), City of Toronto’s Monument for Residential School Survivors as part of Call to Action #82 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), on September 30, 2024. Co-developed with the Economic Development and Culture division and Council Fire (a Toronto service organization), it was created as a prominent and highly visible space featuring diverse programming, teachings, ceremonies, and gatherings to share the cultural traditions of the Original Peoples.
- Veterinarian Services have partnered with corporate sponsors to cut costs for local Indigenous people who need support in covering costly vet bills. Animal services has also built relationships with local Indigenous leaders, as deceased animals that are brought into their clinic are given ceremony to help them on their way to the spirit world.
- The [Capacity-building for Grassroots & Collectives Grant program](#) administered by the Indigenous Affairs Office, Environment and Climate’s [Indigenous Climate Action Grant program](#), and Economic Development and Culture’s [Indigenous Arts Partnership Grant program](#) collectively gave over \$1 million in grants (2023) to artists, earth workers, independent film makers, language carriers etc., to support cultural revitalization within urban Indigenous people and groups in Toronto.
- [Toronto Community Crisis Service](#) is a new approach to responding to someone in crisis that focuses on health, prevention, and wellbeing. Using a non-police-led, community-based, client centered, trauma-informed response to non-emergency crisis calls and wellness checks, Kamaamwizme wii Naagidiwendiiying – “Coming together to (heal or look after or take care of) each other”, the Indigenous led Crisis Response Pilot is operated by 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations in partnership with ENAGB and PQWCHC (Indigenous service organizations in Toronto).

### City of Mississauga:

- Continued relationship between the City and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation (MCFN), as well as the development and growth of relationships with the Huron-Wendat Nation, the Six Nations of the Grand River and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Strongest ties were noted as being with MCFN but City officials expressed their efforts to foster a relationship with all the Treaty and territory partners, striving to live up to the treaties and treat each other as friends and collaborators on important work that is shared.
- Work with Indigenous Nations and communities in a manner which is Indigenous led, most evident in cultural offerings such as official marking of [National Indigenous Peoples Day](#), [Orange Shirt Day/National Day of Truth and Reconciliation](#), growing Indigenous art across the City and Indigenous-focused program offerings such as Truth and Reconciliation programming offered at Museums. City staff reported that the goal is that nothing about Indigenous Peoples is done without involvement of Indigenous Peoples.
- Also recently completed a [City-wide asset naming strategy and policy](#) which

involved a high-level consultation and resulted in a meaningful level of Indigenous inclusion in how the City will be shaped and named, moving forward.

- Consistent approach to meeting legal and regulatory requirements of Duty to Consult by centralizing, educating, and streamlining the engagement and consultation practices. Indigenous Relations advises and guides other teams in the engagement process and are present for the high-profile or high-risk projects (as support only). Some success with introducing considerations such as ‘consultation is a risk management process’ to help align the requirements into more standard municipal thinking. The result has been a marked reduction in challenges to projects, allowing the City to continue much needed infrastructure and development, while also fostering relationships with Indigenous communities.

#### City of Edmonton:

- Large team in Edmonton’s [Indigenous Relations Office](#). Reported that the Urban Indigenous relationship is good and work includes consulting with 32 Nations and some positions specifically deal with MOUs with First Nations, such as Municipal service [agreements with Enoch First Nation](#) (this includes fire services and water services).
- Developed a [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives action plan](#), actions under which include:
  - podcast has been developed to raise awareness about the issue;
  - million dollars in operating funds; and
  - establishing city park space specifically for 2 spirit ceremonies.
- Advocating for provincial funding.

#### City of Vancouver:

- Reported successful relationships with local First Nations - lots of collaboration but also reciprocal financial agreements for consulting work, some [consultants from First Nations will be paid](#) \$250 an hour for reviewing and providing input on archaeological assessments, reports, etc.
- Established an [UNDRIP task force](#) that is specifically tasked with fulfilling its UNDRIP Action Plan.
- Spread the work amongst other departments so that the Indigenous Affairs Office (IAO) are not the only employees doing this type of work; a core team of 4-5 people with up to 20 as a manager or liaison of Indigenous affairs in other areas including Engineering and Facilities.
- Clarifying what is out of scope of the Indigenous Affairs Office including booking speakers for other departments; information is provided for the organization to do it themselves (e.g. a guide on payment for Indigenous speakers).
- Great recreation programs for Indigenous kids, adults, and seniors such as: cedar weaving, beading, regalia making, swim and fitness class discounts - half price for Indigenous children, and museums are free for Indigenous people.

Town of Caledon:

- Caledon established a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with MCFN.
- Putting a document together to show [best practices for staff engagement in building meaningful relationships and engaging with Indigenous peoples.](#)
- Working with library to create events to offer learning for the public.

Region of Halton:

- Short videos have been created to show what the Indigenous Relations staff do and share experiences [working with Indigenous nations/community](#), can be used for training and learning purposes.
- Instituted Mandatory training for staff on Indigenous cultural capacity.

City of Winnipeg:

- Implementing the "[Reconciling our History](#)" policy, which seeks to ensure that the perspectives of Indigenous people are reflected in the stories, historical markers, and place names around Winnipeg.
- [Renaming Bishop Grandin road/trail assets](#) to Indigenous names: "Aninojii Mikanah", "Awasisak Meskanow", and "Taapweewin Way".
- Indigenous Relations Division (IRD) became a member of the Giganawenimaanaanig (formerly the MMIWG2S+ Implementation Advisory Committee), which translates to "we all take care of them." Through advice and guidance from this committee, families and survivors, IRD developed and implemented a now mandatory [Building Cultural Competency - Vehicle for Hire Training](#) (over 300 drivers have already completed) and is adapting the training for all City of Winnipeg employees.

City of Montreal:

- City of Montreal does [consult with Indigenous communities](#) on environmental and archaeological projects - especially with Kahnawake.
- Adopted a [Reconciliation Strategy for 2020-2025](#) which outlines their commitments to advancing truth and reconciliation.

EXAMPLES OF CHALLENGES FROM OTHER MUNICIPALITIES

- How Reconciliation fits into the larger municipal framework, acknowledging it as a requirement and not just a “nice to have”.
- Identified needs for additional support provided by AMO or FCM for education and training before Province or Federal government delegates more responsibilities down to municipalities.
- Implementing Indigenous cultural capacity training for all staff in a large municipality can have operational and implementation challenges.
- Need for a land/gathering space in the city that supports the space needs for Indigenous people, as well as land and water activities. This requires

interdivisional collaboration within the organization, elected officials, and possibly further consultation with Province and/or Federal government.

- Create more opportunities for Indigenous individuals to receive adequate housing.
- Responding to the challenges of increasing rates of poverty for Indigenous residents and creating appropriate urban response strategies.
- Building relationships with Indigenous communities to increase civic participation and co-develop City-wide projects, especially as the City moves to prioritize Indigenous people’s perspectives/needs in projects.
- More public education on issues surrounding Indigenous people, especially to counter misinformation and general ignorance. Reconciliation will always be limited in Canada unless the majority of non-Indigenous people support it.
- The national Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit Peoples crisis still remains a major issue that needs more attention.
- Social and systemic racism are still very large topics of concern.
- Insufficient capacity of the Indigenous Relations team to address requests from other departments and carryout work with the communities.
- Sometimes organizational structure or processes hinder timely approval or adequate support.
- Not having an overarching strategy specifically for Indigenous-related and reconciliation work.