

Treaty Six Acknowledgement Opportunities**Report Purpose**

To provide Council with options for acknowledging the traditional lands of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations.

Recommendation

THAT The Mayor, on behalf of Council, invite a member or members of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations to attend a Priorities Committee meeting to share their stories; and

THAT each Council and Priorities Committee meeting be called to order with an acknowledgement that the meeting is being held on the traditional land of Treaty Six Territory; and

THAT civic events opened by members of Council be opened with an acknowledgement that the occasion is taking place on the traditional land of Treaty Six Territory; and

THAT Administration include information on the historical significance of indigenous people in Strathcona County during the Council orientation program following each municipal election.

Council History

April 4, 2017 – Council approved the notice following notice of motion that Administration provide a report that includes:

- information on the historical significance of indigenous people in Strathcona County;
- an overview of the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee report and information on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons;
- recommended options for meaningful and significant acknowledgement of Treaty No. 6 including ways in which our regional partners undertake such acknowledgement (e.g. presentations from First Nations representatives);

and that the report be brought to Council for consideration by the end of the second quarter of 2017.

Strategic Plan Priority Areas

Economy: The provisions under which the country of Canada was established include the shaping of the local economy in the nineteenth century by the Indigenous peoples' knowledge of the land, agricultural practices and the fur trade.

Governance: Intergovernmental relations between Strathcona County Council and the leaders of the Confederacy of the Treaty Six First Nations could be strengthened by pursuing the principles of one or more of the pathways described in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities publication, *Pathways to Reconciliation*.

Social: Neighbouring communities are taking the first steps toward acknowledging traditional homelands and, as such, making strides toward reconciliation with the residents of Indigenous heritage in our community and in the region.

Culture: The First Nations people gave the place names in the region, and today we continue to use these same names: Beaver Hills, Beaverhills Lake, Cooking Lake, Cooking Lake Trail and Hastings Lake.

Environment: n/a

Other Impacts

Policy: n/a

Legislative/Legal: n/a

Interdepartmental: Legislative and Legal Services; Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs

Summary

The practice of signing treaties was born in the 1800s of, among other reasons, a desire by the Crown to access First Nations land and open it to European settlers. The original Treaty Six was an agreement signed by the Canadian Monarch and 42 First Nations dwelling in present-day Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The Treaty was signed by the member nations over a period of 22 years; the first signing occurred in 1876 and the last in 1898. Nearly a century later, in 1993, the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations was created representing the various band governments of the original Treaty Six. There are 17 member nations: Alexander First Nation, Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation, Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Cold Lake First Nation, Enoch Cree Nation, O'Chiese First Nation, Goodfish/Whitefish Lake First Nation, Heartlake First Nation, Kehewin Cree Nation, Louis Bull Tribe, Montana First Nation, Frog Lake First Nation, Paul First Nation, Saddle Lake Cree Nation, Samson Cree Nation, Sunchild First Nation and Ermineskin First Nation.

Treaty Six territory stretches across the central portions of Alberta and Saskatchewan, as illustrated by the green shaded area in Enclosure 1. In Alberta, the western boundary of Treaty Six follows the Athabasca River from the Banff area, north to Whitecourt, Athabasca and Lac La Biche, reaching Cold Lake on the northeast boundary. From Red Deer, the southern boundary follows the Red Deer River in to Saskatchewan. Strathcona County falls well inside the north central boundary of Treaty Six lands.

As identified on the Strathcona County website, several locations within the County are the traditional lands of the Sarcee, Eastern Woodland Cree, Papaschase Cree and the Métis Nations. The First Nations people gave the place names in the region, and today we continue to use these same names: Beaver Hills, Beaverhills Lake, Cooking Lake, Cooking Lake Trail and Hastings Lake.

As a result of the diverse habitat in the Beaver Hills area, a portion of modern-day Strathcona County saw the establishment of the largest fur trading post in western Canada, known as Edmonton House. The Indigenous peoples' knowledge of the land helped shape the economy of the region through agriculture and the fur trade.

Population numbers declined through the twentieth century and the Indigenous people in the area moved closer to, or in to, the City of Edmonton. As a result, the Government of Alberta Land registry shows no recognized settlements within the County's borders. The rich history of their time in this area lives on in stories told by local Indigenous community leaders.

In order to explore those stories and to establish deeper relationships between our municipal leaders and Treaty Six leaders, a desire exists to bridge the gap. Over the last decade, the United Nations, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities have authored ground breaking, guiding documents that further the effort toward creating and maintaining those connections.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons is a document that describes both individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples around the world on

matters such as: culture, identity, religion, language, health, education and community. The United Nations adopted this declaration by resolution in September 2007. In November 2010, Canada issued a Statement of Support endorsing the principles of the declaration and in November 2015, the Prime Minister mandated its implementation. As of May 2016, Canada announced that it is a full supporter, without qualification, of the declaration.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established in June 2008 and was formed as a component of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Its five-year mandate was to educate and inform on the full spectrum of the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) experience by sharing the stories of the survivors, their families and communities, and anyone else who was touched by this chapter in Canadian history. During this time, they held meetings across the country with former students of First Nations, Métis and Inuit heritage, churches, former employees, the Government of Canada and other agencies.

In June 2015, through the creation of a comprehensive historical record on the policies and operations of the schools, the TRC produced the *Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report* that includes 94 calls to action to “redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.” At the conclusion of the commission, the permanent body of the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation was established and is now known as the NCTR.

The 94 Calls to Action are considered a pathway to reconciliation and were shaped by the following 10 principles:

1. The *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* is the framework for reconciliation at all levels and across all sectors of Canadian society.
2. First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, as the original peoples of this country and as self-determining peoples, have Treaty, constitutional, and human rights that must be recognized and respected.
3. Reconciliation is a process of healing of relationships that requires public truth sharing, apology, and commemoration that acknowledge and redress past harms.
4. Reconciliation requires constructive action on addressing the ongoing legacies of colonialism that have had destructive impacts on Aboriginal peoples’ education, cultures and languages, health, child welfare, the administration of justice, and economic opportunities, and prosperity.
5. Reconciliation must create a more equitable and inclusive society by closing the gaps in social, health, and economic outcomes that exist between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
6. All Canadians, as Treaty peoples, share responsibility for establishing and maintaining mutually respectful relationships.
7. The perspectives and understandings of Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers of the ethics, concepts, and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation.
8. Supporting Aboriginal peoples’ cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential.
9. Reconciliation requires political will, joint leadership, trust building, accountability, and transparency, as well as a substantial investment of resources.
10. Reconciliation requires sustained public education and dialogue, including youth engagement, about the history and legacy of residential schools, Treaties, and

Aboriginal rights, as well as the historical and contemporary contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian society.¹

The report and its recommendations can be discussed in relation to 22 different themes that include:

- child welfare;
- education;
- language and culture;
- health;
- justice;
- Canadian Governments and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*;
- Royal Proclamation and Covenant of Reconciliation;
- Settlement Agreement Parties and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*;
- equity for aboriginal people in the legal system;
- National Council for Reconciliation;
- professional development and training for public servants;
- church apologies and reconciliation;
- education for reconciliation;
- youth programs;
- museums and archives;
- missing children and burial information;
- National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation;
- Commemoration;
- media and reconciliation;
- sports and reconciliation;
- business and reconciliation; and
- newcomers to Canada.

These calls to action will be answered at the federal, provincial and territorial levels of government; however, municipalities are showing their support towards reconciliation as there is an acknowledgement that the challenges manifest themselves at the local level. There is an opportunity for municipal councils to work with Indigenous organizations to strengthen intergovernmental relationships by addressing the current needs of the Indigenous population and by learning from the past.

In 2016, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) gathered the leaders of the larger municipalities to develop a guide for supporting reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in Canadian communities. The resulting publication, *Pathways to Reconciliation*, outlines three primary pathways that could be adopted, possibly in stages, and best suit the unique circumstances of the diverse municipalities across the country:

Pathway 1 – Fostering Communities, Alliances and Hope: Captures actions that demonstrate municipal government commitment to reconciliation. These build bridges with local Indigenous leadership and strengthen decision-making to better incorporate reconciliation into local government policy and practice.

Pathway 2 – Advancing Awareness and Recognizing Rights: Describes efforts to continue the work of the TRC in regards to truth-telling and commemoration and to

¹ The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; *What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation*; Canada, 2015.

address the cultural genocide that was the Indian residential school system. It is about raising awareness, increasing knowledge and recognizing rights.

Pathway 3 – Improving Health and Wellness: Captures actions to close the inequality gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.²

In the Capital Region, two municipalities have begun to embrace the pathways by extending the philosophy of Pathway 2 within a variety of practices. Although no formal policies exist, the Town of Stony Plain and the City of Edmonton currently undertake acknowledgement of Treaty Six in various ways.

The Town of Stony Plain has a Treaty Six flag flying in front of the Town Office. While they do not have a council protocol around acknowledgement of Treaty Six before beginning council meetings, all civic events are opened with an acknowledgement.

The City of Edmonton follows the personal direction of the Mayor with a recognition statement of Treaty Six, Métis Nation and Inuit homelands at the start of every council meeting and at the opening of all city-based events. Both the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and the Métis Nation of Alberta flags fly in front of Churchill Square. Additionally, the City of Edmonton has signed Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Enoch Cree Nation. Also within the city, August 18 was declared to be “Treaty No. 6 Recognition Day” and the week surrounding November 16 is “Métis Nation of Alberta” week.

The journey towards these methods of recognition started with the question, “how do we uncover the stories?” As set out in FCM’s Pathway 2, it begins by fostering relationships, acknowledging traditional homelands, recognizing that we are all Treaty Six people and upholding an appreciation for the provisions under which the country of Canada was first established.

Administration supports the principles of FCM’s Pathway 2 and has enclosed recommendations for acknowledgement opportunities for Council’s consideration.

Enclosures

- 1 Map of Treaty Six Territory
- 2 What We Have Learned: Principles of Truth and Reconciliation
- 3 Pathways to Reconciliation

² Federation of Canadian Municipalities; *Pathways to Reconciliation*; Canada, 2016.