

## **Indigenous Relationship-building Activities in Strathcona County**

Strathcona County has been working to be a more diverse and inclusive community, including moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation.

### **CORPORATE INITIATIVES**

- Raising the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and Métis Nation of Alberta flags permanently in Council Chambers with a flag raising ceremony on June 15, 2021. In attendance were leaders of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations and the Métis Nation of Alberta. An Elder, and a Knowledge Keeper offered blessings for the ceremony. Dancers and drummers performed ...
- On June 15, 2021, Council also approved a revised Territorial Acknowledgement Policy that was reviewed by the intermunicipal Treaty Relationship Renewal Network and Strathcona County's internal Indigenous Working Group. Appropriate amendments were integrated into the acknowledgement in response to feedback from these groups. The acknowledgment was also reviewed by the leadership at the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, the Métis Nation of Alberta, and Elders.
- A corresponding Territorial Acknowledgement Policy Procedures document is being finalized that will detail the communication protocols around appropriate sharing of the new Territorial Acknowledgement at events and on communication materials. The Territorial Acknowledgement will continue to be shared at the start of Council meetings, staff meetings, and at major events including the Celebration of Lights, Arbor Day.
- An interjurisdictional scan continues to evolve and includes territorial acknowledgement information from municipalities across Canada and will include Council orientation information from the same.
- An internal Indigenous Working Group has been meeting over the past year to become a forum for staff to share and learn from each other with respect to incorporating the Indigenous perspective into Administration's work. The overall intent is to create a knowledge hub for administration's use with respect to Protocol, engaging with Elders and Knowledge Keepers, appropriate language, tobacco offerings, for a few examples.
- The Indigenous perspective will be incorporated into Council orientation materials which will serve to address the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #57 that speaks to providing education about Indigenous history. It will also facilitate relationship-building between the County Elected Officials and Indigenous Elected Officials.
- Administration also serve on the intermunicipal Treaty Relationship Renewal Network, initiated by staff in the Town of Devon, comprising representatives from municipalities in the Edmonton metropolitan region, Enoch First Nation, and Alexander First Nation.
- On an annual basis, the County replaces 5-6 rural bridges which requires working through public lands. The province required Indigenous approval for one bridge replacement project in 2018. The Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations directed consultation with Paul First Nation and Maskwacis First Nation. Ray Cardinal, their representative, asked a fish study and extra monitoring be completed. The bridge project has since been approved and will completed in 2021.
- Numerous staff have participated in the interactive KAIROS Blanket Ceremony which included in-depth discussion for further need for more Indigenous awareness training through Staff Development opportunities.
- Numerous staff have taken coursework regarding Indigenous relations through the University of Alberta, Edmonton Heritage Council, Tourism Edmonton, Indigenous Corporate Training Inc, as well as land-based learning with Elder Bert Auger at a local public elementary school.
- National Indigenous Peoples Week Programming

- Celebrating National Indigenous Peoples' Day evolved into a week of events in June 2021. Programming, developed in consultation with Indigenous Peoples, included Métis Jigging, Floral Fish Scales, and Treaty Talk

## **RECREATION, PARKS AND CULTURE**

### North Strathcona County Regional Park Master Plan

- In December 2020, the County engaged with 29 Indigenous Communities and Organizations to request input on the County's approach to the future park site and its cultural and traditional significance. Due to COVID restrictions, virtual workshops were held.
- Participants' input included the necessity of an in-person site visit, preferably with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to better understand more about the site and to provide more detailed feedback.
- These site visits are being planned in conjunction with the Edmonton – Strathcona County Footbridge project for Summer 2021.
- Participants recognized this was the first time that the County included Indigenous Engagement on a project.
- They shared that early engagement and on-going project involvement on future projects was imperative to building long-term relationships and incorporating their experience and knowledge respectfully and meaningfully.

### Edmonton – Strathcona County Footbridge

- In January 2021, a series of virtual workshops were held with 29 Indigenous Communities and Organizations to introduce the project funding partners, share preliminary project information, gather initial input and knowledge for the footbridge project and to discuss further Indigenous engagement activities.
- An overarching theme throughout the workshops was the need for an in-person site visit which are being planned in conjunction with the North Strathcona County Regional Park Master Plan project for Summer 2021.

### The Beaver Hills Biosphere

- The Beaver Hills Biosphere hired Bob Montgomery to lead their Indigenous Engagement portfolio. Administration and Bob are discussing consistency with engaging with First Nations.

### Major Events

- Indigenous group attends Strathcona County Canada Day events annually.
  - Provides the blessing and sets up the area, including the Tipi
  - Displays of historical pieces and regalia
  - Traditional food demonstrations space (e.g. bannock making)
  - Members will educate and interact with Canada Day guests, including Elders, storytellers, dancers, drummers and signers from different regions and Treaty lands
  - Protocol is offered to respectfully ask Elders to share their teachings.
- In 2018, at the national Communities in Bloom conference, the keynote speaker, Pamela Sparkling Eyes, spoke on the "People and the Beaver Hills".

### Festival Place

- Indigenous performers are featured annually.

## Gallery@501

- Highlight one Indigenous exhibit per year
  - 2011 Dana Claxton – “Sitting Bull and the MooseJaw Sioux”  
Various Artists – “Half Breed Mythology” – Alberta Foundation for the Arts Traveling Exhibition Program (with the Art Gallery of Alberta)
  - 2013 Jason Baerg – “Nomadic Bounce”
  - 2016 Jason Carter – “The Wild Party”
  - 2018 George Littlechild – “The Art of Truth and Reconciliation”
  - 2019 Adrian Stimson – “I AM MY FATHER, Reflections on killing the Indian in the child”
  - 2020 Bruno Canadien – “Mother Tongue / Ehts’o Ket’a”
  - 2021 Leah Dorion and Gary Sutton – “Walking Gently: Spirit Stories and the 13 Moons”
  - 2022 TBA – forthcoming exhibition with a notable Indigenous artist
- Community Engagement
  - Education Programs offer connections to exhibitions each year, as well as teaching on the public art pieces around the Community Centre (Alex Janvier staircase and murals in the Library)
  - Artist talks by exhibiting artists are hosted with each exhibit
  - 2016 – Partnered with Aaron Paquette to facilitate a program at Ardrossan Junior/Senior High based on an Indigenous novel
  - 2018 – Artist in Residence program with George Littlechild and Pine Street School
  - 2020 – Dawn Marie Marchand – PD program for teachers at St Luke
  - Hosted Elder Wilson Bearhead for an exhibition opening who led the smudging for the guests

## History and Heritage

- Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples story on interpretive signs at the Biodiversity Trail (2016), Broadmoor Lake Park (2020), and the Strathcona Wilderness Centre (ongoing), and also for signs in production and future signs at Ministik, Ardrossan, Summerton Park, South Cooking Lake. An Indigenous subject expert assisted in describing an Indigenous perspective on the Biodiversity Trail interpretive signage.
- Sourced historic photos from the archives for the signs.
- The Community Heritage Legacy Initiative program focuses on gaining an accurate understanding and awareness by residents, staff and Council that is inclusive of Indigenous history. It is anticipated that information gleaned from this project will be incorporated into a broader telling of Strathcona County’s history, all of which may be used to inform various corporate-wide initiatives, for example policies, strategies, reports, communications, activities, programs and services. As well, the resulting work will be incorporated into content to be posted to the County’s website for public access.
  - Currently engaging an Indigenous educator to:
    - vet existing materials involving Indigenous history captured in settler community history books, to identify any errors or omissions
    - examine the telling of settler history to identify where the vantage can be broadened to incorporate an Indigenous perspective
    - provide a clear narrative on Indigenous Peoples’ history for this region that is accurate with a proper tone

## Strathcona County Museum and Archives

- Financial support has been provided to the Strathcona Museum and Archives for their Indigenous exhibit room and building relationships and exhibits in consultation with Indigenous community.
- The museum has also engaged Elder Bearhead on its functional plan engagement to help design the future of the museum.

### Strathcona Wilderness Centre (SWC)

- “Peoples of the Land” programming section is incorporated into the enrichment guide
- Working with Elk Island Public School Board First Nations, Métis, and Inuit consultants to review programs and create land-based learning programs for their schools. Through these consultants, SWC staff are developing relationships with Elders to learn, lead, and source authentic Indigenous clothing and supplies for programs.
- Developing SWC staff training activities to enhance skills and knowledge to lead programs.
- The Strathcona Wilderness Centre Canoe Project is commissioner three public art works by two Indigenous artists that will be applied as decals on three Voyageur Canoes.
- SWC is working with the Beaver Hills Biosphere Education team to plan programs for 2021-2022 to incorporate Indigenous authors into program materials.

### Anishnawbe Giikenimowgaywin

- The Anishnawbe Giikenimowgaywin received a grant from Strathcona County to develop a holistic healing facility at South Cooking Lake.

### Public Art

- Land acknowledgement markers were installed on the Heritage Mile. Consultation on the text was conducted with Indigenous educator Pamela Sparklingeyes.
- Three murals by Indigenous artist Alex Janvier are featured in Strathcona County’s public art collection. His abstract style, lines and colours convey lessons and stories of his Dene culture and opposing of colonialist practices.

- 2020 Commissioned three interior artworks by two Cree/Métis Artists (Gary Sutton & Dawn Marie Marchand). One will be hung outside Council Chambers in 2021.
- 2021 With permission of the artists, digitally reproduced these artworks into large water-resistant decals to adorn 3 canoes at the Wilderness Centre.
- 2019 Commissioned Métis artist William Frymire to create playful exterior sculpture at the Ardrossan Spray park.
- 2021 Invested \$70,000 to repair and clean the Alex Janvier mural on the County Hall Staircase.
- 2021 Extensive writing on all Indigenous artworks in the art collection were posted for National Indigenous Peoples’ Week.