

REPORT

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

To: Mayor Cote and Members of Council **Date:** October 3, 2022

From: Lisa Spitale,
Chief Administrative Officer **File:** 05.1035.10

Item #: 2022-688

Subject: **Council update on research into actions taken by the City of New Westminister involving Indigenous peoples from 1860-1999**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council receive for information an update on research into actions taken by the City of New Westminister involving Indigenous peoples from 1860-1999.

THAT Council receive for information upcoming activities of the City's Reconciliation work plan as detailed in the next steps in this report.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report threefold. First, to present to Council an update on research into actions taken by the City of New Westminister involving Indigenous peoples from 1860 – 1999. Second, to advise Council on engagement with First Nations surrounding the findings of this research. Third, to provide Council with details of a Truth Before Reconciliation Strategy, outlining City reconciliatory activities from 2022 and progressing into 2023.

BACKGROUND

On April 19, 2019 Council passed the following motions:

THAT the City undertakes research to better understand the historical actions of the City as they relate to First Nations; and

THAT the City provides opportunities for the community to learn the history and legacy of colonialism in New Westminister.

ANALYSIS

The above motions have been addressed through a detailed review of historic City actions and an analysis of these actions through the lens of three guiding documents:

1. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action which Council committed to on April 10, 2017.
2. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which was endorsed by Council as a framework for truth and reconciliation on December 3, 2018 (18 of the 44 UNDRIP Articles interface with the findings of this work).
3. "In Plain Sight Report: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care", which in itself, is a response to the Articles of UNDRIP.

Outcomes of this work will support City Council reconciliatory efforts with First Nations holding current or past interests in the New Westminster area. Moreover, this work will facilitate educating the community around the history and legacy of colonization in the City. In particular, two of the 16 "Calls to Action" identified for response by municipal government are addressed through this work - numbers 43 and 57 which respectfully state:

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as the framework for reconciliation

and

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal-Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

A complete draft report summarizing actions taken by the City of New Westminster involving Indigenous People from 1860-1999 can be found as **Attachment 1** to this report.

In summary, this work has found six categories of action where the City's past actions have been found to contravene the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As well research has found five emergent narratives that describe the story of council actions between 1859 and 1999.

Categories of Action

1. Removal, Displacement and Relocation of Indigenous Peoples
2. Use, Lease, Purchase and Sale of Reserve Lands

3. Regulation of Indigenous Peoples
4. Management of Indigenous Bodies
5. Engagement With Indigenous Peoples
6. General Impacts of Colonization

Emergent Narratives

1. Infringement upon rights of Indigenous peoples as an avenue to establish municipal structures
2. Segregation of Indigenous Peoples to maintain colonial settler interests
3. Characterization of Indigenous peoples and First Nations as a homogenous group
4. Characterization of Indigenous Peoples as a financial burden
5. Retention of City colonial image and function

NEXT STEPS

City staff have begun engagement with Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Musqueam, Qayqayt, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations around the findings of this research. The intent of this engagement is to work with these nations to seek support and guidance in educating City staff and the community on the impacts of past City actions. To this end, it is anticipated a series of workshops will be developed around The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as well as the histories of the Nations sharing interests to the settled lands now called New Westminster.

Beyond this research and engagement update, further next steps for the Reconciliation work plan include the continued evolution of the Elder in Residence Program that began in September 2022 whereby an Indigenous Elder joins us at City Hall every Wednesday. He is available for meetings, conversations, and relationship building for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff. Soup and bannock is also provided for lunch which encourages staff to participate in a safe and casual atmosphere where they are free to be themselves. The Elder is also available to support Indigenous staff who sometimes feel isolated working within Western institutions.

In 2023, the Manager of Indigenous Relations will begin recruiting for a Coordinator position to support Reconciliation work within the City. The Coordinator will provide guidance to City staff on their own Reconciliation portfolios, as well as continue to build relationships with local First Nations and the urban Indigenous community.

The Indigenous Relations Department will also begin the development of an Urban Indigenous Coalition to be presented for approval to Mayor and Council mid to late 2023. There are currently 37 Urban Indigenous Coalitions on Turtle Island. They spread from coast to coast to coast in nearly every province and territory. About 80% of the country's Indigenous population live in urban centers yet they are not included in the distinctions-based approach (First Nation, Metis and Inuit) utilized by Canadian

governments. New Westminster does not have a First Nation land base within its boundaries, but has many urban Indigenous people living amongst the community. This group has been entirely underrepresented and urban Indigenous Coalitions provide support to this population. Urban Indigenous committee memberships range from any number of both, Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations from Friendship Centres and First Nations to School Districts, health units and municipalities. Their mandates vary based on the needs of their local Indigenous community. These coalitions are often first initiated and funded by the municipality and as they build their foundation, become entirely Indigenous led.

The last big project for the coming year is the *Truth before Reconciliation Strategy*.

Phase One in this strategy began in July 2022.

Phase One was the establishment of a Reconciliation Working Group. City staff attended the first meeting of SQUÁPSTUL YA:YS (Gathering to Work), or “Reconciliation Working Group” on July 26th 2022. The working group will be overseen by the Reconciliation, Social Inclusion and Engagement Task Force. It includes Public Engagement, Human Resources, Museums & Heritage and Indigenous Relations Divisions but all departments are welcome and encouraged to participate. This working group defines roles and responsibilities in order to engage all levels of the organization, external rights holders, stakeholders, and City Council to create a coordinated approach, and holistic strategy to advance Reconciliation.

Phase Two will determine the scope of the study.

Phase Three will focus on a public and private sector review of leading practices and approaches with focus in the areas of employments, engagement and representation on boards, committees and advisory committees but will include all operational areas.

Phase Four will conduct a city inventory by taking a holistic approach to identifying and addressing systemic barriers within the City. This phase will use an equity lens to complete a full, corporate wide review of policies, procedures, programs, practices and resources. This review will begin in the areas of employment, engagement and representation on boards, committees, and advisory committees but will include all operational areas. The inventory will also outline the intended outcomes of these initiatives to identify ways to address systemic barriers.

Phase Five will be the development of an Indigenous engagement strategy to identify the barriers or obstacles in participating in engagement, recruitment and retention with the City and participation on Boards and Committees. Included in the preparation of an engagement strategy will be the completion of an Information Report.

Phase Six will be a gap analysis and assessment. It will identify areas where the City is doing well, areas where more resources or a different approach is required, and where gaps or barriers may still exist that are not currently being addressed. It will include a

series of recommendations and associated outcomes; propose a methodology for ongoing measurement; and a cost benefit analysis. Upon completion, the Task Force will have identified various potential approaches for a strategic plan.

Phase Seven will create an Organizational Reconciliation Strategic Plan and Implementation Roadmap. The inventory, review and gap analysis will be the foundation for the development of a strategic plan and implementation roadmap. Upon completion, the Task Force will submit an approval report on strategic plan and roadmap.

The time frame for completion of the *Truth before Reconciliation* will be largely dependent on the level of engagement and support from City departments as well as the depth of analysis and could range anywhere from two to ten years.

In January 2023, the Indigenous Relations Department will release an annual report regarding activities for the 2022 year but will also include an overview of Reconciliation activities leading up to 2022.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Beyond Reconciliation budgets previously approved by Council, there are no immediate financial implications to the recommendation of this report.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council's consideration:

That Council:

1. Receive for information an update on research into actions taken by the City of New Westminster involving Indigenous peoples from 1860-1999.
2. Receive for information upcoming activities of the City's Reconciliation work plan as detailed in the next steps in this report.
3. Provides staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends options 1 & 2.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Draft Summary Report on Actions Taken By City of New Westminster Involving Indigenous People: 1860-1999

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:

Christina Coolidge, Indigenous Relations Advisor
Rob McCullough, Manager of Museums and Heritage Services

This report was approved by:

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