

REPORT
Office of the Mayor and
Office of the CAO

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of
Council

Date: January 22, 2024

From: Denise A Tambellini
Manager Intergovernmental and
Community Relations

File:

Christina Coolidge, Indigenous
Relations Advisor

Item #: 2024-25

Subject: **Funding Submission to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities
(UBCM) Regional Community to Community Program 2023/2024**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council authorize the submission of a funding application under the **UBCM Regional Community to Community Program 2023/2024** as described in this report; and

THAT the Chief Administrative Officer and the Corporate Officer be authorized to enter into a funding agreement with the Province of British Columbia.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to request support for a grant submission for up to \$10,000 to the UBCM Regional Community to Community Program 2023/24 to engage local First Nations.

SUMMARY

Staff are recommending the submission of an application to the UBCM Regional C2C program for up to \$10,000 in order to offset the costs for City Council to engage local First Nation Councils in 2024. The purpose of the fund is to increase understanding and improved overall relations between First Nations and local governments.

BACKGROUND

The area now known as New Westminster is located on unceded and unsurrendered lands of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. Halkomelem is a common language spoken by the many First Nations that have been resident to this land since time out of mind; it is comprised of three dialects (Halqeméylem or upriver, hə́ŋqəmińəh or downriver, and Hulqumíńurń or island). The interests of many First Nations speaking these dialects overlap in the area that was settled on, and is now occupied by the City of New Westminster. The use of the term Halkomelem is inclusive, respecting the ties and asserted rights each of these Nations have to this land.

The City of New Westminster's commitment to engagement with the First Nations is two-fold: regulated engagement in the form of consultation, and relationship-based engagement with the goal of partnership and co-governance.

The City fulfills its legal obligation to consult with local First Nations on City developments and activities by connecting as early as possible in the planning phases, and conducting ongoing audits of internal processes to ensure consultation practices are efficient, effective, and mutually beneficial.

Forging supportive and effective partnerships with First Nations is a lifelong process enabled through building trust, respectful engagement, and active listening.

During the period from 2018 to 2021, the City of New Westminster began to openly engage with multiple Nations around projects within our regulatory control. Nations are identified through both the Provincial Consultative Areas Database and Port of Vancouver consultation list. These largely center on consultation around OCP bylaw amendments.

Additionally, at this time the City began communicating with First Nations to seek their active involvement in the development of City strategies and plans that may eventually require senior government funding or permitting. The City is legally responsible to consult with local First Nations on City developments and activities as early in the planning phases as possible. The City continues to audit internal processes for the purposes of developing consultation practices that are efficient, effective, and mutually beneficial.

Examples of regulated engagements include: various amendments; advising developers of requirement to consult; seeking First Nation participation in Reforestation, Flood

Mitigation and Hume Park Master Planning, Biodiversity, and Community Energy and Emissions Plan strategies.

Council to Council Meetings

Along with engagement at a staff level, there is also a need to recognize and work with local First Nations at a government to government level. Council has met with several First Nations and is committed to continue to develop strong relationships. Council to Council meetings work to increase understanding between governments, support dialogue to build relationships, support reconciliation efforts, resolve issues of common responsibility, interest or concern, and advance tangible outcomes. The meetings are working toward a Protocol Agreement between governments to understand how we can work together.

Year of Truth

The New Westminster City Council proclaimed March 2023 to 2024 A Year of Truth as part of the City's ongoing reconciliation efforts. The City recognizes that reconciliation can only be successfully achieved after learning and acknowledging the full truth of our colonial history. The concept for A Year of Truth was inspired by education and relationship-building work done by the previous City Council and the Summary Report on Actions Taken by the City of New Westminster involving Indigenous Peoples.

The City is committed to partnering/collaborating with First Nations leaders (Government to Government), to ensure Indigenous rights, land title, history, values and priorities are respected, understood and established as a first step prior to any project work commencing. Recognizing the rich history of the river and its importance as a key resource for local Indigenous communities, our goal is to foster a co-development model as a way to rebalance how we work with the Nations, and co-create the Riverfront more holistically.

New Westminster's reconciliation efforts are motivated by a responsibility to recognize and to honour the deep original connections to this area by Halkomelem speaking Nations, some of whom lived here along the banks of the Fraser River, and others who passed through by land or water to travel between territories. New Westminster is also the birth place of colonization in British Columbia, as it was the colonial capital. The City acknowledges that its very existence was built upon the destruction of the land and river connections of the original inhabitants, and of their lives and livelihoods. Therefore, it is the City's responsibility to correct the wrongs of our colonial history. To that end, New Westminster's relationships with the First Nations of this land and with the urban Indigenous community is an ongoing strategic priority for the City.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was mandated to provide guidance on achieving reconciliation through truth and healing, both within Indigenous families and between Indigenous peoples and non-Indigenous communities and governments. The TRC provides 10 principles of truth and reconciliation and 94 specific calls to action that inform and guide New Westminster's reconciliation journey. <https://www.newwestcity.ca/truth-and-reconciliation-calls-to-action>.

UBCM Regional Community to Community Program 2023/24 Pilot Program

In January 1997, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) and the First Nations Summit (FNS) jointly organized the first province-wide Community to Community (C2C) Forum. This event brought together First Nations and local governments from across BC to discuss common goals and opportunities for joint action. There was consensus among the participants that regional C2C Forums should be supported. Since then, the provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Indigenous Services Canada have provided funding for the C2C program.

Nearly 700 C2C Forums have been held in communities across the province. With both BC and Canada adopting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada releasing its Executive Summary of findings and 94 Calls to Action in 2015, the C2C program has taken on ever greater importance as First Nations and local governments use the grant to focus their increased efforts for reconciliation.

The C2C program supports funding for:

1. Forums that support dialogue to build relationships, support reconciliation efforts, resolve issues of common responsibility, interest or concern, and/or to advance tangible outcomes.
2. Development of agreements (such as protocols, MOUs, and service agreements), joint plans and/or strategies that advance First Nation/local government reconciliation and relationship building.
3. Joint review of bylaws and/or policies in order to develop recommendations for amendments or new bylaws and/or policies that advance reconciliation.

ANALYSIS

Based on prior meetings with several First Nations, staff are recommending using C2C provincial funding to support formal meetings with First Nations in 2024.

This is an opportunity to leverage Provincial Funding to help build meaningful relationships with local First Nation to discuss issues of mutual concern including the future of the Westminster Pier Park fire site, meaningful community work plans and cultural exchange.

The fire at Westminster Pier Park occurred on September 13, 2020, resulting in the total destruction of a significant portion of the park and public art installations located there.

Following clean-up and remediation work, the undamaged section of the park was reopened to the public in April 2021. Since then, the city has settled the insurance claim with our insurer and will be receiving funds for the loss of this significant park asset.

Work supported by this funding is proposed to include:

- Council to Council meetings to strengthen and foster cooperation
- Support for First Nations Governments with an interest in New Westminster
- Support for park planning and funding to build capacity with the First Nations
- Meetings regarding the future of the Westminster Pier Park fire site.

With the support of the Province, through UBCM, this funding will be used for Council to Council meetings with local First Nations.

Staff are recommending the submission to the UBCM Regional Community to Community Program 2023/24 be used to support City Council and First Nations Council meetings.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

This funding will contribute to the financial sustainability of the City.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This funding submission, for up to \$10,000, will offset costs incurred during City Council and First Nation Council meetings in 2024. The C2C program will cover 100 percent of expenses with any additional costs coming from existing city resources.

UBCM has issued a conditional approval for this funding.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON

This report was written in collaboration with the CAO’s Office.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council’s consideration:

1. Authorize the submission of a funding application for up to \$10,000, under the **UBCM Regional Community to Community Program 2023/24** for Council to Council meetings with local First Nations.
2. Chief Administrative Officer and the Corporate Officer be authorized to enter into a funding agreement with the Province of British Columbia; or
3. Provide other direction to staff.

Staff recommends Options 1 and 2.

CONCLUSION

Staff are recommending the submission of an application to the UBCM Regional C2C program for up to \$10,000 in order to offset the costs for City Council to engage local First Nation Councils in 2024. The purpose of the fund is to increase understanding and improved overall relations between First Nations and local governments.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - UBCM Regional Community to Community Program 2023/24 Pilot Program- & Application Guide

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
Denise A. Tambellini Manager Intergovernmental Relations
Christina Coolidge Indigenous Relations Advisor

This report was reviewed by:
Jennifer Miller, Manager of Public Engagement
Shehzad Somji, CFO and Director of Finance

This report was approved by:
Lisa Leblanc, Acting Chief Administrative Officer