

COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date: 2 May 2022

Subject: Indigenous Engagement Update

Boards Routed Through: Community Services Advisory Board

Date: 14 February 2022

Issue:

Council is being provided with an update on Indigenous engagement.

Background:

In 2021 Community Services Advisory Board (CSAB) and Council reviewed Community Development's levels of service and expressed a desire to increase festivals, events, and heritage preservation. This included the importance of focusing on understanding, engaging the right people and voices to raise awareness and recognition of Indigenous Peoples and culture. On July 5, 2021, Council endorsed the recommendation of the Community Services Board to develop Indigenous Relations and Heritage Strategies. With guidance and support from CSAB and Council, Community Development will provide a high-level update on the strategic approach and engagement planned with Indigenous Peoples for 2022.

Foundational information of Canada's history and our responsibilities as Canadians is important to help build Indigenous awareness and relationships. Indigenous peoples were living on the land we now call Canada for thousands of years, with their own unique cultures, identities, traditions, languages and institutions. The pre-colonial First Nations population of Canada is estimated to have been between 500,000 and two million people. In Canada, Treaties represent the genesis of First Nations and the Crown's nation-to-nation relationship. The Crown is the legal name for the British and later Canadian governments: federal, provincial and territorial. Starting in 1701, the British Crown entered treaties with Indigenous Nations to support, respect and create reciprocity through inter-tribal trade alliances, peace, friendship, safe passage, and access to shared resources within another nation's ancestral lands. Treaty No. 1 was the first of the numbered treaties that helped establish Western Canada. Treaties were written in law through the Crown and First Nation signatories and state; this contract would be in place for "as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the river flows".

Indigenous Peoples have had a complicated, dishonorable and at times, a cruel history in Canada. From imposing a colonial system of governance on Indigenous cultures, to the mandatory surrendering of Indigenous children to residential schools, there were many government actions taken with the intent to control or get rid of the “Indian problem”.

Societal views have evolved and on September 13, 2007, the [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#) was adopted with the majority of 144 states (Countries) voting in support of the Declaration. Canada was one of four Countries that voted against the Declaration at that time but later signed the declaration after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada concluded its mandate. This work resulted in the creation of the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: 94 Calls to Action](#). On December 15, 2015, Canada made its commitment to the recommended calls to actions and in 2016, Canada officially endorsed UNDRIP.

Federal, provincial and municipal governments are in different stages of implementing the principles and objectives that were outlined in UNDRIP. As a society, the importance of truth and reconciliation continues to gain momentum. As Canadians, understanding the impacts of colonialism and raising awareness of Canada’s history with Indigenous peoples is a difficult journey.

TRC Calls to Action offers a pathway to establish new relationships and a new future for all Canadians that is based on knowledge, mutual understanding and respect.

In July 2021, Alberta Municipalities Association (formerly Alberta Urban Municipalities Association) released [A Municipal Guide to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action](#) to support reconciliation and to help municipal leaders, staff and communities understand and support truth and reconciliation initiatives. The reputation risk for a municipality not having knowledge and understanding of the importance of truth and reconciliation can have long lasting impacts. If municipal organizations are not thoughtful and coordinated in their approach, establishing new relationships with Indigenous people may be difficult and existing ones could be damaged.

Leadership plays a key role in demonstrating a commitment to social responsibility and the City of Airdrie’s core values directly align with this work. Airdrie’s Indigenous population is relatively high with over 5% of the population identifying as having Aboriginal identity. This compares to Calgary at 3%, St. Albert at 4% and Red Deer at 5%. Working with the Indigenous population in a municipal context will help to guide many aspects within our community including cultural events, public art, tourism, performing arts, economic development, social services and capital projects to name a few. There are numerous Federal and Provincial grant opportunities and resources to assist municipalities’ progression with this important work.

Council’s endorsement of Community Development 5-Year Plan includes the following strategies for Indigenous Engagement:

- Engage with the right people, leaders and voices to honour history, to understand truth and reconciliation, to engage Indigenous peoples and celebrate Indigenous culture.
- The creation of the Culture and Heritage Strategist position.
- Contract funding to obtain resources required to create an Indigenous Strategy (Elder support).

- Build relationships with Indigenous peoples based on the principles of reconciliation, acknowledging the truth and to start the process of healing.
- Develop an Indigenous Relations Strategy that defines the framework of how the City of Airdrie will approach and take actions in a culturally informed manner to help address gaps and barriers experienced by Indigenous Peoples in Airdrie.

Airdrie has already taken important steps to enhance truth and reconciliation but with the addition of a dedicated resources (Culture and Heritage Strategist) to support Indigenous Engagement, a consistent, coordinated and informed approach will be implemented.

A Path Forward to Developing a Strategy Towards Indigenous Engagement

Vision

Airdrie is recognized by local Indigenous communities as an ally (supporter) in the truth and reconciliation process.

2022 Community Development Goals:

- To support Airdrie's journey towards Truth and Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples and ensure the City is working toward meaningful and productive relationships.

Key Actions:

- Provide Council and Boards information on a path forward on Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action.
- Provide the organization with subject matter expertise on cultural awareness.
- Provide the City of Airdrie with effective and informed protocol guidelines.
- Provide guidance on Indigenous municipal public art projects.
- Provide support for Indigenous events – community-led.
- Provide guidance on Indigenous events – municipally-led.

Indigenous Engagement Plan for 2022:

Currently, Community Development is working with the Project Management Team to map out and implement Indigenous consultation for the Airdrie Multi-Use Facility and Public Library Project. The Community Development team is hoping to leverage this relationship-building process to further advance Truth and Reconciliation efforts of the City.

The Community Development team is supporting the community with June 21st National Indigenous People's Day activities and September 30th National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Commemorations, as well as various Indigenous public art projects. Support includes sourcing and helping with grant applications to support Indigenous activities and projects, making connections within our community and neighbouring Indigenous communities, and working with internal groups to support Indigenous awareness.

Proposed Actions on Council Follow-up:

In September 20, 2021, Council made a motion directing Administration to Report back:

- A. Administration and Council consultation with both Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 and Treaty 7 First Nation leaders; and
- B. Review feasibility of the City having additional flags at City Hall and other City properties that recognizes both the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 and Treaty 7 First Nations.

Community Development is researching best practices employed by other municipalities that have implemented the raising of Indigenous flags. These municipalities have advanced Truth and Reconciliation actions and have developed strong partnerships with Indigenous Communities before doing any kind of work regarding erecting flags in the community.

As a municipality, the addition of Indigenous flags within the City of Airdrie needs to include nation to nation, or leadership to leadership conversations to access the desire of raising flags by both nations. This would involve meetings with Airdrie's elected officials and all Treaty 7 Nations' Chiefs and Councils, as well the Métis Nation of Alberta. The timing of this consultation process is difficult to predict.

Due to the complexity of this process and the time-sensitivity associated with Indigenous consultation on the Library Project, Community Development is suggesting the best approach is to strengthen relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples through the Library Engagement and use this opportunity to listen to Indigenous priorities regarding what is important to them with respect to Truth and Reconciliation actions. Demonstrating sincerity, willingness and commitment, in a culturally informed way will support organizing future leader to leader meetings.

If there is a shared desire from Indigenous Communities and by Council to raise Treaty 7 First Nations and Métis Flags within the City, Administration will present a budget that includes all aspects of fulfilling this commitment, including consultation, protocol, and ceremonial costs guided by advice of Elders and best practices for Indigenous engagement.

Administration will return to Council in 2022 with additional information and options on how we can collectively move towards modeling and implementing Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Actions into our policies, initiatives, programs and internal practices.

Alignment with South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and AirdrieONE:

Sustainability Perspective

Culture is considered an important pillar of sustainability. A community that is connected to art, culture and recreation is a community that cares for and stewards its people and environments.

Boards Routed Through:

At their meeting of February 14, 2022, Community Services Advisory Board accepted the report as presented and was supportive of the progress that had been made regarding Indigenous Engagement.

Alternatives/Implications:

1. Council could choose to endorse the path forward to developing a strategy towards Indigenous engagement.
2. Council could choose to provide an alternative direction.

Recommendation:

That Council endorses the path forward to developing a strategy towards Indigenous engagement.

Jennifer Lutz
Team Leader Community Development

Presenter:	Jennifer Lutz
Department:	Community Development
Reviewed by:	Clay Aragon
Attachments:	N/A
Appointment:	N/A