



# Project Briefing Note

December 2019

## Re: Update on City of London's Truth and Reconciliation Initiatives

### Issue:

This note provides a concise update on a number of initiatives underway, covering two streams of engagement:

1. Formal responses to Council direction with respect to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action; and,
2. Relationship building initiatives with neighbouring First Nations Communities and in the community with local and regional indigenous peoples' organizations.

### City of London's Efforts to Respond to the Adopted Calls to Action of the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

At the December 8, 2015 meeting of Council, City staff were directed to advance three specific Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report:

- "c) *the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to report back to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee with a plan to act on two recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report being Recommendation 57, related to intercultural competency training for municipal employees; and Recommendation 77, related to municipal and community archives working with the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to identify and collect copies of all records relevant to the history and legacy of the residential school system; it being noted that this report should include a work plan and overview of the budgetary implications of completing the work plan;*
- d) *the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to consult and collaborate with the London Public Library with respect to Recommendation 77 noted in part c) above;*
- e) *the Civic Administration BE DIRECTED to report back to the Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee on developing a prominent memorial in London, acknowledging the history of Canada's residential school system and its former students."*

#### A. Call to Action #57

Beginning in 2016, the City of London's Human Resources department began working with neighbouring First Nations communities to develop an intercultural competency training package for City of London staff. The training package includes fundamental

information relating to relationship building, human rights, anti-oppression and anti-racism. The Initial package was rolled out in October 2017 as part of London's annual Employee Update event and was presented to roughly 2,000 employees. This information is now part of the City of London's core training program for all new employees.

More recently, a "train the trainer" session for facilitating Blanket Exercises was also conducted in April of 2019 and it has helped the City of London execute a series of Blanket Exercise offerings on a regular basis, wherein, the staff from the City conducts the Blanket Exercise. These monthly sessions allow staff from the City as well as staff from community stakeholders and partners to attend together. The model allows for a greater impact on those attending, as people see the impact of residential schools, as well as the ongoing effects of historical racism and colonization within various service sectors.

The City of London has also incorporated a Policy on Use of Indigenous Medicines in the Workplace. It was launched on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019 to coincide with the National Day of Solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

Looking ahead into 2020, a calendar of events has been developed to enhance understanding and raise awareness of the Indigenous Peoples in Southwestern Ontario. The calendar will be shared with all the management to plan for those events in advance to ensure staff's ability to attend these events as they occur over the year.

#### B. Call to Action #77

In 2016, The London Public Library facilitated the collection of records from local institutions relating to the residential school system, working with local First Nations communities and organizations. All relevant records which were identified as part of this process have now been forwarded on to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. Unfortunately, there did not appear to be a high volume of local sources at that time.

#### C. Call to Action #82

This Municipal Council Resolution was intended to honour the legacy of the residential school survivors, recognizing that residential school survivors and next generations living in London may have attended residential schools across Canada. The project will have consideration for the local story of the Mount Elgin Residential School, which was previously located closest to London at the Chippewa of the Thames First Nation. It was suggested that there should also be an acknowledgement of the missing residential school children within the scope of the project.

In the spirit of the Two Row Wampum of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous of friendship, peace and respect between two nations, we have developed a project team

that is connected to the local and national Residential School Survivor group and the supported by Elders. This project team is constituted by non-Indigenous members who specialize in public art who have working relationships with Indigenous artists, and Indigenous members who specialize in community development and Indigenous teachings and ceremonies.

Throughout 2019 we have been building trust, listening, participating in Indigenous ceremonies and conducting research about what other communities have been doing related to Indigenous public art. Our project team has recently been introduced to the residential survivors group of London. The London Arts Council continues to work with Indigenous Artists to research and create Indigenous artworks and to consult about how to engage both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists with this project.

For 2020, Tracey Whiteye as part of her Masters of Social Work Practicum will be guiding the Project Team to conduct local consultation through traditional Indigenous methodology. The purpose of this consultation will be to better understand what the residential school survivors and the local First Nation and Indigenous community would like the public art memorial to be to honour the memory and bring understanding and healing to a very painful residential school experience that people do not want to talk about.

Once we have a better understanding of the public art that will respect how the residential school survivors want their legacy honoured and their truth heard, we will proceed to work together in the spirit of the Two Row Wampum to create the artwork(s) through London Arts Council artist and story-teller collectives.

### **Relationship-Building Initiatives with Communities and Organizations**

An informal review of services and programs provided by the City of London that touch neighbouring First Nations communities or urban indigenous populations was conducted in 2018. The review found that there are over 100 instances of programs or services that include interaction with Indigenous Peoples or communities in and around London. From water to transportation, childcare and social services, at a service level, the City of London is working alongside Indigenous Peoples in our community. Therefore, our relationship-building initiatives listed here represent only a small portion of these initiatives underway in London.

### Council to Council Engagement

Following the 2018 municipal election, the Government and External Relations Division has met with all three neighbouring First Nations communities to begin the planning of a social/educational Council to Council opportunity, tentatively set for early 2020. The initiative was widely cited as an important next step in strengthening and enhancing relationships between elected leaders. The aim is for members of London's City Council to have an opportunity to meeting with the leadership of each First Nations community and the planning is well underway to inform the collective agenda of this event. Additional details will be coming shortly.

### City of London/N'Amerind Friendship Centre Memorandum of Understanding

The City of London is working with N'Amerind Friendship Centre to achieve greater impact in improving the lives of urban Indigenous people in London through strategically partnering resources and sharing expertise where possible. This work will be guided by this MOU. An update to Council on this work will be coming back to Council in early 2020.

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