

Report to Council



Date: June 21, 2021
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Indigenous Relations
Department: Office of the City Manager

Recommendation:

THAT Council receive, for information, the report from the City Manager, dated June 21st, 2021, regarding past, current, and future activities related to Truth and Reconciliation;

AND THAT Council direct staff to allocate resources towards development of a cultural relations program, in part, to advance and build upon the current and past City efforts related to Indigenous relations, as an important step towards meaningful Truth and Reconciliation;

AND THAT Council direct staff to participate in any regional efforts with other local governments, institutions and First Nations, towards implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations applicable to Local Government;

AND THAT Council support an increase in staff training and enhanced Council orientation, related to aboriginal history and Truth and Reconciliation;

AND FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to report annually on progress to implement Calls to Action associated with the Truth and Reconciliation recommendations that are applicable to Local Government.

Purpose:

To provide Council with an update on City actions to advance Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and to obtain support for a path forward.

Background:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its Calls to Action report in 2015. The report includes 94 Calls to Action that speak to all sectors of Canadian society to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation.

On Thursday May 27, 2021, the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation announced the discovery of a series of unmarked burial sites containing the remains of 215 children at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. The remains are believed to be undocumented deaths. While this shameful part of our history is well documented and has been known for many years, the discovery has reemphasized the importance and need to advance reconciliation with Indigenous people across Canada.

Flags at City facilities were lowered to half-mast between May 31 and June 10 to honour the 215 children found buried on the site of the former residential school in Kamloops by keeping flags lowered for one hour for each lost innocent life. While symbols of remorse are important, staff recognizes the need to continue to follow through with positive and concrete actions.

Previous Council Resolution

Resolution	Date
THAT Council direct staff to provide Council with an information report on the status of any plans or actions the City of Kelowna is undertaking or can be advancing with respect to Truth and Reconciliation with our local First Nations.	May 31, 2021

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action are directed to all sectors of Canadian society to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation. While there are only 12 Calls to Action addressed to all levels of government, there are others which may be interpreted as applicable to the City through our direct and indirect involvement with other systems and partners. Some of these Calls to Action include actions which are not within the scope of municipal government but are within the scope of agencies with which the City has working, contractual or funding relationships, including; healthcare, law enforcement, arts and culture, sport and education. The next steps proposed in this report to Council are intended to help give staff the guidance and competencies they need to influence and collaborate with our partners as they navigate responding to the Calls to Action within their own organizations and systems.

Appendix 'A' outlines the various initiatives that have been completed or are underway to help advance Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. It is by no means comprehensive and it is acknowledged that current work falls short of what we can and should be doing as a City. The information is provided as a means of giving Council a sense of some of the joint efforts that are occurring and the positive steps taken in recent years.

Discussion:

The Imagine Kelowna community vision, which guides our work, states our collaboration goal of engaging with the Okanagan's traditional past and heritage as foundations for building a fair and equitable community. We will do this by honoring our rich heritage, while also following the lead of our local Indigenous communities towards a path of reconciliation. In addition to being a collaborative community, Imagine Kelowna sets out a strong commitment to being a responsible community that protects our natural resources which is also an important element of reconciliation.

Since the community visioning exercise in 2018, there has been some level of enhanced communication with and involvement by local First Nations on specific projects and initiatives, however, policy improvements and changes in formal practices have not been enshrined in documents that guide our interactions, consultation or information sharing with Indigenous partners.

Council identified the need to be a Social and Inclusive community as a top priority in the 2019-2022 Council Priority document. Within this category, things such as, utilizing territorial acknowledgements and creating a community for all are highlighted.

Education and awareness is integral to advancing truth and reconciliation calls to action. In 2017/2018, the City collaborated with Syilx/Okanagan educators to develop educational workshops based on traditional En'owkinwixw learning circles. Approximately 70 staff attended these workshops. In addition, resources have been made available for all City staff on territorial acknowledgements, providing information on the Syilx traditional territories and member First Nations bands, as well as a reference to other policy initiatives and programs that other municipalities are advancing to improve their Indigenous relationships. The emphasis since the workshops has been on self-study and personal responsibility for learning the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada and the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' Calls to Action. As a result, staff have been engaging more with First Nations governments and Indigenous serving agencies at a project level in a variety of ways, both formal and informal.

However, staff feel there is a need and an opportunity to move the City beyond self-directed learning at the employee level to building broader organizational competency in Indigenous relations and cultural awareness. Moving forward, things such as Council onboarding programs, staff training, and orientation programs should also include an Indigenous component to ensure the commitment to Truth and Reconciliation is strongly recognized.

Staff also recommend participating in any regional efforts towards Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action implementation, with Westbank First Nations and Okanagan Indian Band. While it is recognized that each municipality may have individual opportunities to advance their own initiatives, relationships, and education, there may be some benefits to regional conversations with, other local governments, the health authority, post-secondary institutions, and industry. The City of Kelowna will also provide clear direction and support to all employees regarding expectations related to truth and reconciliation; ensuring Indigenous perspectives are considered in various aspects of our business.

Conclusion:

While the City has made some progress towards the Truth and Reconciliation Calls for Action, it's clear that more should be done. The above recommendations will support reconciliation efforts across all City departments within our community and region.

Internal Circulation:

Active Living and Culture
Corporate Strategic Services
Office of the City Clerk
Partnerships and Investments

Submitted by:

D. Gilchrist, City Manager