

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Chief Administrative Officer

Indigenous Municipal Relations

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Oxford County Council receive Report No. CAO 2021-06 titled “Indigenous Municipal Relations”;
2. And further, that County Council direct staff to develop a local response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) Calls to Action (http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf), working with the City of Woodstock, Towns of Ingersoll and Tillsonburg, and the Townships of Blandford-Blenheim, East Zorra-Tavistock, Norwich, South-West Oxford, and Zorra on a coordinated approach, focusing on several calls to action that explicitly include municipal governments.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- This report was initiated for the purpose of taking meaningful steps to enhance relationships and collaboration with the Indigenous Councils and Nations who have current or historical interests in the County of Oxford.
- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s (TRC) Calls to Action, published in 2015, provide the County with direction on how to develop and implement a respectful approach to discovering the truth in a local context and lay the foundation for the important work of reconciliation.
- Resources abound to guide our journey, including those published by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Association of Municipalities Ontario, and the City of Brantford’s national scan of municipalities who are addressing the TRC Calls to Action.

Implementation Points

The County has the opportunity to implement the TRC’s Calls to Action, including, but not limited to several that explicitly call on municipalities.

With the adoption of the recommendations in his report, staff will develop a local response, including implementation points, for further consideration by County Council.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts with adoption of this report.

Should funding be required for specific deliverables to address the Calls to Action, such as awareness training for public servants, staff will present to Council accordingly, prior to implementation.

Communications







County staff have been, and continue to be, actively engaged with a variety of internal and external stakeholders who are working to build relationships with Indigenous Peoples:

- City of Woodstock
- Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan Coordinating Committee (RE: implementation of priority risk #4 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion)
- Oxford County Children's Services Indigenous Advisory Committee
- Oxford County Archives
- Oxford County Human Services
- Oxford County Libraries
- Social Planning Council Oxford
- Town of Tillsonburg
- Township of Zorra
- Woodstock Art Gallery

This list is continually growing; it does not represent a definitive list of all efforts in our communities to build relationships. Ongoing, open dialogue with the growing list above will continue upon adoption of this report, providing continual opportunities for information sharing and shared learning.

The CAO's Office will reach out to area municipalities, via the respective CAOs, to identify synergies and opportunities to collaborate on addressing the TRC's Calls to Action.

Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
WORKS WELL TOGETHER	WELL CONNECTED	SHAPES THE FUTURE	INFORMS & ENGAGES	PERFORMS & DELIVERS	POSITIVE IMPACT
1.ii.		3.ii. 3.iii.	4.i.		

DISCUSSION

Background

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) Calls on Municipalities to Take Action.

The TRC spent six years travelling across the country to hear from the Indigenous people who had been taken from their families as children and placed in residential schools. They heard from more than 6,000 witnesses whose accounts are at times difficult to accept as something that happened in Canada.

The TRC's focus on discovering the truth was intended to lay the foundation for the important work of reconciliation and recognized that reconciliation would require a commitment to mutual respect. Further, the TRC recognized reconciliation would require an understanding that the most harmful impacts of residential schools were the loss of pride and self-respect of Indigenous people, and the lack of respect that non-Indigenous people were raised to have for their Indigenous neighbours.

The TRC final report clearly states that reconciliation is not an Indigenous problem; it is a Canadian problem, and that virtually all aspects of Canadian society may need to be reconsidered.

In order to redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of reconciliation, the TRC made 94 calls to action (http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf) in areas including child welfare, education, language and culture, health, justice, professional development and training, youth programs, and many more. These calls to action address all levels of government, educators, health care providers, religious denominations, faith groups, the corporate sector, and Aboriginal organizations, among several other groups.

Several calls to action explicitly include municipal governments:

- Call to Action Number 43: We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to fully adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as the framework for reconciliation. (For more information on UNDRIP(<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>))
- Call to Action Number 47: We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius (e.g. nobody's land), and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts.

- Call to Action Number 57: 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.

Comments

Commitment to Mutual Respect

Implementation of the Calls to Action requires careful consideration and a long-term commitment to relationships where Indigenous communities can represent themselves and their histories on their own terms. We must ensure that we respect the needs and wants of Indigenous people which requires learning about:

- The lands we inhabit, the history of the lands, and how to actively be part of a better future going forward together with Indigenous people;
- The history of colonialism, Indigenous ways of knowing, and settler-Indigenous relations;
- Acknowledging and righting the wrongs of history; and,
- Improving the relationship of people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, with the land around us.

Further, this report CAO 2021-06 recommends collaborating with area municipalities in the short term to share information, assets, and capacity in a collective approach. Coordinated development of deliverables such as those in the list below will benefit all involved, and provide consistent resources for all Oxford County Departments, area municipalities, community organizations, and businesses.

- Awareness training for public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples
- Consultation protocol and Indigenous engagement principles
- Land Acknowledgement guidelines and framework that provides statements respecting the context of use
- Advocacy role on key issues facing Indigenous communities

County Efforts To-Date

A few teams and / or individuals at the County have already completed a significant amount of work to better understand Truth and Reconciliation, and what we can do as a municipality to increase our awareness and understanding on the history of Aboriginal peoples.

Staff on the Archives Team, the Children's Services Team, and the Oxford County Library Team are key internal partners to help the CAO's Office develop a localized plan to implement the TRC's Calls to Action.

The County has also created its own staff-driven, volunteer-based committee to develop an internal approach to growing as a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization. This includes learning about the history of Aboriginal peoples as recommended in the TRC Calls to Action,

which prompted the team to develop a variety of learning opportunities on September 30, 2021 in observance of Canada's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (also known as Orange Shirt Day.)

Starting Point: Official Plan Duty to Consult

On October 13, 2021 Council approved **Report No. CP 2021-336** - Special Meeting of Council to Initiate a Review of the County Official Plan under Section 26 of the Planning Act.

The Review of the County's Official Plan is an opportunity to begin the work outlined in this report, given the County's required engagement with Indigenous communities in order to address the Province's duty to consult as part of that process. Staff can use this opportunity to reach out and begin the longer-term process of developing relationships that will enable us to address the TRC's Calls to Action in meaningful ways.

To our benefit, AMO published "Municipal Governments and the Crown's 'Duty to Consult': Towards a Process that Works for Local Communities" (Attachment 1) as a resource for municipalities to advance municipal-Indigenous relationship-building.

The CAO's Office will work with Community Planning staff throughout the Official Plan Review drawing on the expertise of other County staff as needed.

Resources (provincial): Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) currently provides municipalities with two resource documents:

1. An overview of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC's) Calls to Action that municipal governments can address, titled "Resources on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action" (Attachment 2)
2. Ideas and options for what municipal leaders/councils can do to better support and engage their Indigenous residents and neighbours at this time, titled "What Municipal Leaders Can Do to Better Support Indigenous Residents and Neighbours at This Time" (Attachment 3)

Resource (federal): Federation of Canadian Municipalities

As the national voice for Canada's local governments, FCM continues to make reconciliation a priority in their outreach to the federal government.

Their "Pathways to Reconciliation: Cities respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action" guide (Attachment 4) outlines the concrete steps municipalities are taking to respond to the TRC's historic Calls to Action – from fostering community alliances and recognizing Indigenous rights to improving the health and wellness of Indigenous peoples.

Resource (local / regional): City of Brantford

Closer to home, The City of Brantford's Healthy Brantford Task Force published a research brief titled "Municipal Strategies for Addressing the TRC Calls to Action: a National Scan"

(Attachment 5) which provides insight into how municipalities can respond to and carry out the TRC Calls to Action at a local level.

Brantford's research provides Oxford County with a literature review on best practices to carry out the Calls to Action at the municipal level, an inventory of current practices at nine municipalities in Canada, and recommendations for next steps (City of Brantford-specific.)

The findings suggest that there are five (5) dominant approaches to engagement being used by Toronto, Thunder Bay, Surrey, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Hamilton, and Halifax. The dominant approaches include:

1. Urban Declaration / Accords: one of the most common approaches to begin engagement with urban Indigenous populations by municipalities was often a declaration or an accord publicly announcing their commitment to relationship building, cooperation, and dedication to supporting and uplifting urban Indigenous citizens.
2. Government to Government Agreements: Government-to-Government agreements are especially important to communities which actively engage with nearby communities, or exist on traditional territory of Canada's Indigenous peoples.
3. Staff Allocation / Departments: dedicated departments, offices, or employees seems to be an increasingly popular approach to addressing urban Indigenous needs. In the spirit of taking action on the TRC's Calls to Action, a dedicated department allows a municipality to build relationships and take the appropriate amount of time to engage with a population historically forgotten.
4. Committees: dedicated committees with representation from the various Indigenous communities which provide direction for work focused on the needs of Urban Indigenous peoples.
5. Framework / Strategies: due to the thoroughness and the inclusion of potential partnerships with community partners and other communities, frameworks or strategies have the potential to have larger impacts and provide an opportunity for more focused initiatives along the way.

What the Brantford study suggests is that there is a multitude of options and opportunities for engagement with urban Indigenous populations. To move forward it will be important to reflect on what already exists in the community.

Conclusions

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action specifically call on municipal governments to do their part in discovering the truth and laying the foundation for the important work of reconciliation and commitment to mutual respect.

The adoption of this report will facilitate an ongoing, coordinated long-term conversation with the County, area municipalities, and Indigenous peoples, building on conversations that are already occurring.

SIGNATURES

Report Author:

Original signed by

Dennis Guy
Manger of Strategic Initiatives

Approved for submission:

Original signed by

Michael Duben, B.A., LL.B.
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – AMO Municipal Governments and the Crown’s ‘Duty to Consult’: Towards a Process that Works for Local Communities, April 10, 2019
Attachment 2 – AMO Resources on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action, August 23, 2021
Attachment 3 – What Municipal Leaders Can Do to Better Support Indigenous Residents and Neighbours at This Time, August 23, 2021
Attachment 4 – FCM Pathways to Reconciliation: Cities respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, November 2016
Attachment 5 – City of Brantford Municipal Strategies for Addressing the TRC Calls to Action: a National Scan, February 25, 2018